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Marxism Today

J. R. CAMPBELL

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MARXISM AND AFRICAN LIBERATION

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THE USE OF CYBERNETICS IN SOCIOLOGY

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DISCUSSION:

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ON THE BASIS OF MARXISM
ON THE WELFARE STATE

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A New Theology of the Cold War

J. R. Campbell

AN American economist and economic historian, Mr. Walt Whitman Rostow, has written a book entitled *The Stages of Economic Growth* which has thrilled *The Economist* from the crown of its head to the soles of its feet. In fact, it could not wait until the book came off the press but had to publish a very extensive summary in two issues last August. One gets a slight idea of the cause of this excitement when one realises that the sub-title of the book is "A Non-Communist Manifesto". Mr. Rostow with true American modesty says that if his system "is to challenge and supplant Marxism as a way of looking at modern history it must answer, in its own way, the question posed under the rubric of 'imperialism' by the Marxist analysis as elaborated by Marx's successors." The "stages of growth" he tells us in another place "constitute an alternative to Karl Marx's theory of modern history." Hence the sub-title "A Non-Communist Manifesto".

Such an undertaking is not the first and will not be the last of its kind. It has, however, become important to the Western imperialists, who are fighting to influence, not only the working class in the capitalist countries, but also the people of the ex-colonies. The imperialists have no intelligible explanation which links the economic and political events of this century. There have been two great devastating wars and an economic crisis of unprecedented dimensions. The century started with a fierce struggle between monopoly capitalist states for the possession of colonies. It is now witnessing the fierce struggle of many colonial peoples for political and economic independence. The world is now in the throes of a nuclear arms race, which is creating tremendous alarm everywhere. At the beginning of this century, no socialist states were in existence. Now socialist states cover one-third of the world. Imperialist writers have never been able to give a coherent explanation why these events, which are obviously inter-linked with each other, occurred. They offer *ad hoc* explanations of every major event. The war of 1914-18 was due to the growth of German militarism; of 1939-45 to the rise of fascism, and there is a struggle for colonial liberation, which each particular writer interprets

in his own fashion, but a coherent interpretation of the events of this century there is none. Obviously, if imperialist apologists could arrive at an explanation of all these phenomena which is coherent and plausible, and if this explanation absolved them from any responsibility for the sinister events which have been happening in this period, it would satisfy a long-felt want of the monopolists and their governments. If, in addition, this explanation could offer to the workers in capitalist countries and the peoples in the ex-colonies a reasonable perspective it would make all capitalist propagandists happy. All this Mr. Rostow proposes to do by substituting his view of history for that of Karl Marx.

New Theories

Now Mr. Rostow, who was Professor of Economic History at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has been labouring in this quarry for quite a long time. He worked on the Economic Commission for Europe from 1947 to 1949 and then began to pour out a series of books such as *The Process of Economic Growth* (1950), *Dynamics of Soviet Society* (1953), *Prospects of Communist China* (1951), and *American Policy in Asia* (1955). So the present compact study (166 pages) is in many ways an application and completion of previous lines of work. In it the following themes are developed:

A new theory of capitalist economic growth, which Mr. Rostow believes is superior to that of Marx. Whatever has been the case in the past, capitalism in its latest stage is advancing towards abundance for all. Casting his eyes back on the past, he believes that he has a clearer idea of the forces making for economic growth than Marx had.

Then there is a new theory about state relations in the late nineteenth century and today which he claims refutes the communist theory of imperialism.

Economic growth in the capitalist world is then compared with economic growth in the socialist world. The Soviet economy, he thinks, is not as competitive as is generally believed.

Then there are remarks about relations of the

capitalist world to the colonies in the past and its relations to the ex-colonies in the present. This is bound up with a discussion on the policy of peaceful co-existence.

Finally, Mr. Rostow's "mixty-maxty queer hotch-potch" is contrasted with Marxism-Leninism, to the very great disadvantage of the latter.

Let us begin with his stages of economic growth. Marx, according to Mr. Rostow, described the economic stages from feudalism to capitalism as follows: "Feudalism, Capitalism, Socialism and Communism." Mr. Rostow's categories are: 1. the traditional (or pre-capitalist) societies; 2. the pre-conditions for capitalist development (accumulated capital, science and "free" labour); 3. the take-off (when society begins to advance in many directions to capitalism); 4. maturity (the stage when the development to a fully fledged capitalist society has been reached); and 5. the era of high mass consumption (which the U.S. is alleged to have reached today). Other capitalist powers are hesitating on the threshold of this age.

In contrasting the two conceptions Mr. Rostow misrepresents Marx. "Marx's conception of feudalism" he says, "is too restrictive to cover all the traditional societies, a number of which did not develop a class of nobility, linked to the crown, owning large tracts of land. Marxist analyses of China, for example, have been strained on this point." But Marx (apart from primitive communism), distinguished slavery, *Asiatic society*, feudalism, and capitalism. In fact, he dealt in detail with the conditions of some traditional societies in Asia which Rostow accuses him of leaving out. We shall see that Mr. Rostow is only too prone to rash and shallow generalisations of this kind.

Because he neglects to analyse the emergence of the bourgeoisie in feudal society, he jumps stages and commences with a description of capitalist society, virtually in being.

"Some men must be able to manipulate and apply modern science and useful cost reducing inventions." This, we presume, refers to scientists and inventors.

"Some of the men must be prepared to undergo the strain and the risk of leadership, in bringing the flow of inventions into the capital stock.

"Some of the men must be prepared to lend their money at long term, to back the innovating enterprisers . . . in modern industry.

"And the population at large must be prepared to accept training for—and then to operate—an economic system whose methods are subject to regular change."

Sources of Accumulation

This method leaves out of consideration the source of some of the accumulations of wealth, which were used to initiate developments in a capitalist direction. The robbery of the monasteries, the enslavement of the population of Latin and Central America, the looting of India and South East Asia by the English and the Dutch, the astronomical profits made in the slave trade, the development of plantation systems in the colonies which were worked by slave labour, the establishment of unequal trading relationships between the metropolis and the colonies; all these were the basis of the accumulations in the hands of the rich, which helped to launch capitalism on its career.

And "the population at large [which] must be prepared to accept training" was provided by the dissolution of the monasteries; the disbandment of the feudal retainers; the repeated enclosures which drove masses of peasantry off the land; and (at a later stage) the ruin of handicraftsmen by the competition of the factories.

Indeed, Rostow's conception of the conditions of the capitalist "take off" is very similar to those ridiculed by Marx. "In times gone by there were two sorts of people; one, the diligent, intelligent, and, above all, frugal elite: the other lazy rascals, spending their substance and more in riotous living. Thus it came to pass that the former accumulated wealth and the latter had at last nothing to sell but their skins. And from this original sin dates the poverty of the great majority that, despite all its labour, has up to now nothing to sell but itself, and the wealth of the few that increases constantly, although they have long ceased to work." (*Capital*, Vol. I, Chapter 26.)

In actual life, however, it is the masses of the people and not the would-be capitalists who had to undergo the "abstinence" which made accumulation possible and it was the deprivation of the peasant of his land, and the separation of the handicraftsman from his means of production, that created the propertyless working class which had no alternative but to "accept training" for capitalist industry.

The fantastic thesis of Rostow can only be given a certain plausibility by underplaying the actual class structure of society, and the resulting exploitation of the workers and peasants, which channels the surplus value created by the masses into the hands of the capitalist class, partly for further accumulation and partly for a degree of wasteful luxury living, which far surpasses that attainable by other exploiting classes in previous class societies. The capitalist, or the capitalist firm,

endeavours always to accumulate as a condition of survival. But it is wrong to assume that the capitalists are only concerned with accumulation, and not with maintaining a standard of luxury living that is in glaring contrast to the living standards of the majority of the people, and also (in our day) with the niggardly standards of the social services.

For example, one of the conditions for the development of capitalist society is described by Rostow as follows: "The income above minimum levels of consumption, largely concentrated in the hands of those who own land, must be shifted into the hands of those who will spend it on roads and railroads, schools and factories, rather than on country houses and servants, personal ornaments and temples." Here the expenditure of the capitalists on productive resources and schools, is contrasted with the luxury and prestige expenditure of pre-capitalist landed nobility. This conveys a dangerous half-truth. Certainly the activities of the capitalist class in accumulation are in marked contrast to the consumption expenditure of the feudal rich. But in addition to their activities in accumulation the capitalist class were able to achieve a degree of luxury expenditure on "country houses and servants, personal ornaments", not to speak of Rolls Royces, yachts and private planes which make the spendthrifts of feudalism look very small beer indeed. This question is not an academic one. Rostow is advocating a capitalist style of development for the economically underdeveloped countries which will involve them in tolerating a lower standard of life, and a lower rate of growth, because they will have to carry such a rich exploiting class on their backs.

Capitalist Colonial Record

The great imperialist powers have the aim of keeping these economically backward countries which have just achieved their political (but not economic) independence within the orbit of the capitalist system. They are handicapped in doing this by their past history in the colonies, which was one of brutal repression. Many active leaders in those backward countries accept an explanation of the operations of the imperialist powers in the colonies, which in some respects coincides with that of the Communists. They believe that colonial exploitation is connected with the capitalist system and that this system is seeking in countries which have recently achieved independence to continue colonial exploitation by other means.

Further, when imperialist propaganda seeks to depict the Soviet Union as a menace to world peace, the colonial peoples cannot forget: (1) that it was the so-called Western democracies and their

ally, Japan, which subjected them by force and fraud and (2) it was the civilised West which started the two great wars in this century. This is the formal indictment which Mr. Rostow has to answer, and he does not succeed.

He does not distinguish the various stages in the subjection of the colonies. One never quite knows whether he is referring to the old colonial system of the 17th and 18th century, based on looting, on the plantation system, and on unequal trade, or the more recent colonial systems, following the development of monopoly capitalism and distinguished by the export of capital.

"Why was not trade conducted without the creation of colonies?" he asks. His answer is that the wars of the eighteenth century were dynastic wars to enlarge the territory of one royal family, controlling a national state against the other royal families. The wars for colonies in the eighteenth century were a kind of "side-show". "In part the wars in the colonies were derived from those larger competitive compulsions [the aforesaid dynastic wars—J.R.C.]; the compulsion not merely to advance a national interest positively but to advance a national interest negatively by denying a source of power to another nation. The creation of a trading monopoly in a colonial area was one way to do this, once the new areas were discovered or old areas rediscovered." If, however, colonies had not been looted, if plantations worked by slave labour had not been established, if huge profits had not been made by unequal trading, there was no point in debarring a rival from going in for them. It was because the emerging capitalist class had gained much from the colonies it already had that it was prepared to go on expanding, and to do its utmost to prevent its rivals from establishing any, as, for example, the wars of the French and the British in India and North America.

However, the main reason for the establishment of colonies, in Rostow's scheme, was not due to the profit seeking of the capitalists. It was all due to the failure of the colonial peoples to organise themselves properly. "Colonies were often established initially, not to execute a major objective of national policy, not even to exclude a rival economic power but to fill a vacuum." (We will find that filling vacuums is an explanation that is resorted to frequently in this book.) "In the four centuries preceding 1900, however, the native societies of America, Asia, Africa and the Middle East were at various stages, structured and motivated neither to do business with Western Europe nor to protect themselves from Western European arms; and so they were taken over and

organised. Some economic group wanted to expand its purchases or its sales [Rostow is shy about using the word profit]—it encountered difficulty in arranging the conditions for efficient business; it encountered also gross military weakness; and it persuaded a government which looked kindly on its efforts to take responsibility for organising a suitable political frame-work to ensure at little cost, the benefits of expanded trade.” Not a word about super-profits. As a description of the relations between a colony and the imperialist metropolis this is really laughable. Certainly the occupation of India increased trade (as well as tribute) between that country and Britain. But the type of trade conducted was calculated to benefit the metropolis and most definitely distorted the normal development of the colony. The metropolis obtained food and raw materials, in exchange for manufactured goods. Those factory manufactured goods destroyed India’s world-famed textiles industries (based on handicraft) and no other industries took their place.

For decades British imperialism resisted the granting of a tariff which would enable the Indian bourgeoisie to protect its nascent industries from foreign capitalist competition. This was a policy which definitely halted Indian economic and social development; which encouraged all the backward and reactionary forces in Indian society; which frowned even on the moderately progressive bourgeoisie; and which therefore strangled Indian development for many years. Rostow has a section on the development of Japan, but never asks the pertinent question why Japan was able to engage in independent economic development, while India on a high level of civilisation was not. It was not that Japan possessed the social forces capable of absorbing the technical achievements of the West while India did not. The forces were there in India but imperialism halted their development. This strangulation of the development of historic societies is mentioned by Rostow in such phrases as “imperial powers pursued policies which did not always optimise the development of the preconditions for take-off”, but excuses them by saying that “they could not avoid bringing about transformations in thought, knowledge and institutions—as well as in trade and in the supply of social overhead capital—which moved the colonial society along the path towards take-off.” But Japan acquired the “thought, knowledge and institutions,” and developed its own social overhead capital (means of transport, etc.) without ever being a colony. Left to themselves other Asiatic countries would

have done the same. The occupying imperialists stopped them.

Naturally Rostow does not spoil his idyllic colonial picture by referring to the export of capital to the colonies, or the super-profits earned on it, which were, and are drained from the colonial and ex-colonial countries and become the basis for capital investment and luxury expenditure elsewhere. But this is old history Rostow says. Mature capitalism is less dependent on colonies. “While colonialism is virtually dead, capitalism in the Western Hemisphere, Western Europe and Japan is enjoying an extraordinary surge of growth.” This of course turns on the word “colonialism”. The United States has never admitted that the tremendous economic dependence of Latin American countries on the U.S.A. for capital investment (from which the United States monopolists derive super-profits) and for markets for food and raw materials, is a form of colonialism. Yet enormous tribute is extracted from these countries; accumulation and independent economic development is hindered because of this tribute, the economy of the country is distorted and governments are made and unmade by the United States pressures and concealed intervention. Even though the client states of the United States which are scattered all over the world are not dubbed colonies, their colonial status is only too evident. The same essential relationship is being assumed between Britain and a number of its former colonies—Nigeria, for example. Monopoly capitalism is still operating in the former colonies and imperialism so far from being dead is assuming new forms.

If one takes the oil, the food, the raw materials, flowing to the monopoly capitalists from Asia, the Middle East and Africa it is greater than ever. There is no diminution in the investments of monopoly capitalism in these areas nor in the profits earned by the monopoly capitalists overseas. True, the economic grip of imperialism is under heavy attack but the battle has still to be won, and the Rostow policy is designed to prevent it being won by the peoples who have recently attained a measure of political independence.

Monopolists and War

Having whitewashed imperialism in relation to the colonies, Rostow proceeds to do the same in relation to the great wars of the twentieth century. Marxism-Leninism demonstrates that the development of monopoly capitalism expresses itself in the growth of tariff barriers, in the scramble for colonies as a sphere of investment and a source of raw materials, and in the growth of political

reaction. It is noteworthy that the word fascism seldom occurs in this book. The main struggle in the First World War was that between the satisfied colonial powers, France and Britain, and their challenger, imperial Germany. Most bourgeois historians agree that this war had something to do with Germany's drive for a large colonial empire and that the German effort to challenge Britain in a naval armaments race was a necessary part of that drive. This view was completely confirmed when the victorious allies after the First World War stripped Germany of its colonies. Rostow will have nothing of this. The two great wars of this century were about "the Eurasian power balance". Germany, Tsarist Russia and Japan were growing to be major industrial powers. But there was not a similar growth in the countries in Eastern Europe in which Rostow appears to include Poland (divided between Russia, Austria and Germany), the other countries in the Austro-Hungarian empire and the Balkans. These countries were therefore weak and it was a terrible temptation to Germany to seize them. China was lagging in economic growth and so Japan had a similar temptation in the Far East. Hence First and Second World Wars. Germany had the possibility of going in for peaceful development and an era of high mass consumption but was prevented by the grip of the Kaiser and the reactionaries, who, in turn, were the product of the "reactive nationalism" which had dominated Germany from 1848.

Rostow seems to imagine that his own specific theory of "reactive nationalism" is a wonderful discovery which sheds a new light on the problems of war in the past and of the emergence of new nationalities in Asia and Africa in the future. What set Britain on the way of capitalist development, he infers, was the emergence of new productive forces and new social groups *within* the dissolving feudal society, in other words, the transformation from feudalism to capitalism brought about internal forces and pressures. But once capitalism was in being in Britain, its superiority for war, diplomacy and trade, was in effect a pressure on countries in a more backward state of economic development. Some of the rulers of those countries, who are not capitalists out for the maximum profit, but were soldiers and statesmen, began to favour capitalist economic development, because it increased the power of the state. There is nothing new in this. In the *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels had pointed out that the bourgeoisie "compels all the nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it

calls 'civilisation' into their midst, i.e. to become bourgeois themselves. In one word it creates a world after its own image." Or the remark of Lenin that "by their colonial looting of Asian countries the Europeans managed to harden one of them—Japan—for great military exploits that assured it of an independent national development."

Alibi for Capitalists

Rostow's view, of course, gives German monopoly capitalism and the Ruhr magnates a perfect alibi in both wars. It was the Junkers and other nationalist groups, who had originated in a previous stage of development, who were responsible. As for the French, British and American imperialists and monopoly capitalists, they had no responsibility for the wars at all, they merely intervened to prevent Germany tipping the "Eurasian power balance". Thus all the conflicts over colonies from China to Africa are wiped off the slate, the Anglo-German conflict over the Middle East and the Berlin-Baghdad railway, the German-French conflict over Morocco which nearly brought the war in 1911, are all ignored. This theory is tailor-made to prove that monopoly capitalism, or "mature capitalism" as Rostow calls it (he denies the growth of monopoly in America) never caused any of the wars in the past and will therefore cause no wars in the future. There could scarcely be a more blatant attempt to distort history for cold war purposes.

Of course, the conflict of Tsarist Russia, the Austro-Hungarian empire and Germany played a role in the First World War, but it was subordinate to the fight for empire between British and German imperialism.

Marxism and War

Marxists have always emphasised that German capitalism came belatedly on to the world stage. By the time that German re-unification was completed, in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war, the economically underdeveloped countries in the world had already been divided amongst the other imperialist powers, either as colonies or client states. German monopoly capitalism had therefore to content itself with the colonial leftovers of the other powers, or it had to begin a struggle for a redivision of the colonial territories of the world. It was not the Junkers, the representatives of the traditional elements, but the great magnates of the Ruhr and other industrial centres, who supported the development of a German navy which would challenge Britain's mastery of the seas and its possession of the world's best colonies. Indeed, the recklessness of the magnates

caused disquiet amongst some Junker elements who felt that it was dangerous and premature to challenge Britain on the seas. No—German monopoly capitalism was a ruthless driving force in both wars and is one of the most impenitent warlike forces in the world today.

But whatever caused the First World War—"power vacuum" in Eastern Europe or the struggle for world empire, the German monopolists were in it. They were obviously the aggressors in the Second World War. Now they have been put back into power by the Americans, aren't they still dangerous?

Once again Rostow drags in the "power vacuum" to prove that they are not. It appears that this vacuum no longer exists. "Key areas in Eastern Europe (notably Poland and Yugoslavia)" in Rostow's opinion, "are hardening up", and so "the arena over which the First and Second World Wars were fought and the first phase of the cold war as well, no longer exists." So Rostow deliberately shuts his eyes and ears to the clamour of the West German monopolists, their henchmen and their dupes for a revision of the post-war frontiers at the expense of Poland and Czechoslovakia. Power vacuum or not, West Germany is the main dissatisfied power in the world today.

Soviet and U.S. Industry

When Rostow turns to the situation in the Soviet Union the confusions and inconsistencies in his argument multiply. There is a long muddled economic section sustaining the propositions: (1) that the Soviet Union is not likely to catch up to the U.S.A. economically as fast as some people think, (2) nevertheless, unless the Western capitalist world can generate more rapid growth, the imperialists will be in a difficult position, (3) there is nothing to prevent the Soviet Union catching up but there is no great danger if it did, provided the capitalist world can do certain things that it has not yet shown itself capable of doing.

To understand this one must realise that a great deal of attention is being devoted to the question of American and Soviet economic growth by the U.S. Congress, whose Joint Economic Committee recently engaged in an exhaustive study of this question. The experts on the Joint Committee revised Soviet statistics *downwards*. One of the periods of Soviet economic growth that is studied is from 1928 to 1955. Some U.S. economists point out that this was a rather unfair comparison, for it included the war years when German forces had occupied large areas of the Soviet Union and had systematically destroyed Soviet industry during their retreat. Nevertheless even when the war years are

included the Soviet industrial production increased, according to the Joint Economic Committee of Congress, by 7.7 per cent per annum.

The best years of American economic growth that the committee could find were from 1867 to 1907 and from 1922 to 1927. In those periods the annual increase of American industrial production was 5.2 per cent in the first period, and 5.3 per cent in the second.

If one takes another period from 1928 to 1955 (which includes the Great Depression in the U.S.A.) then the annual increase in industrial production was only 3.6 per cent—exactly half of the Joint Committee estimate of the annual increase in Soviet industrial production.

There is, however, a short period from 1950 to 1955 when the Joint Committee is prepared to concede an increase of 9.9 per cent per annum of Soviet production, as compared with an increase of 4.4 per cent per annum of U.S. production. It is on this basis that it stated that "the U.S.S.R. in the short run present [from 1950 to 1955] appears to be expanding its industrial output at a rate about twice as great as that in the United States, while over the longer period the rate has been about 50 per cent greater than in the United States".

However, if we omit from the Soviet side the years 1941-46—the years of the destruction and reconstruction of Soviet industry—then the results of the Joint Economic Committee survey would give a rise of Russian industrial production of about 10 per cent for the 1928-55 period (minus the war years). Another American authority, Mr. D. Hodgman of California University, has given figures for the same years which add up to 12 per cent annual increase in Soviet production. The Soviet figures for the same period give an annual increase of 15 per cent. In the 1950-55 period Mr. Hodgman's figures of annual increase of 10.9 per cent, and Soviet figures are 13.1 per cent, so that the annual Soviet increase in production is between two and a half and three times greater than that of the United States.

If one wants to know the reason for this then one must go back to the basic difference between the two systems. Soviet industrial progress has not been halted by a series of economic crises—large and small—and there is no rich capitalist class, no well-to-do coupon-clippers, wasting an ever-increasing proportion of the national surplus in luxury consumption.

But Mr. Rostow, having already omitted the role of capitalist luxury consumption in an earlier period of capitalist development, naturally forgets to introduce it now. We will see that he also

refrains from doing it in relation to the development of the ex-colonies. In fact his only real argument against giving too much weight to Soviet economic growth is that sooner or later the Soviet people are going to demand more consumer goods and this will slow down capital investment. But the Soviet peoples are getting more consumer goods, yet Soviet economic growth continues to exceed that of the U.S.A. This means that in any struggle to influence the uncommitted world the Soviet Union will exert a tremendous weight. What does Rostow suggest should be done?

Monopoly capitalism need not fear Soviet competition, he holds, (1) provided that it can maintain full employment, and (2) provided it can prevent inflation and rising prices by measures which do not prevent economic growth.

But these are precisely two of the problems that capitalism has not solved, and Rostow doesn't suggest any solution. There have been three crises in the U.S. since the war—the last of which lasted longer and was more severe than its predecessors (though still not of the 1929-33 vintage). This crisis was preceded by a period of dear money to stop inflation, but which also stopped economic growth. The recovery from that crisis had hardly got going when the banks, raising the cry of the inflation danger, began to demand that the brakes be put on again. The various speeches of the Chancellor, above all his Budget speech, show that a similar policy is being pursued in Britain. It is absurd to argue that monopoly capitalism need not fear Soviet economic growth provided that it succeeds in doing two things that it has never yet done.

Soviets and Peace

In discussing the Soviet Union's role in relation to peace, Rostow embroiders the old theme that Russia is out to conquer the world. "For forty years now men have been told in Russia that fixed laws of history decree that the external world is implacably hostile and must ultimately be conquered". [Italics ours.] People in Russia are also told "that this struggle is inescapable". "Russia is a nation seeking to convert its maturity into world primacy by postponing or damping the advent of the age of mass consumption." Can you believe it? Almost every economic periodical in the U.S.A. is discussing the Soviet claim that it can catch up and surpass the United States in production and consumption per head of the population. A plethora of articles are devoted to analysing whether this can be done, and in the midst of this, in steps Rostow to declare that the Soviet Union is not only not aiming to surpass the U.S.A. in consumption per head but it is actually damp-

ing down high mass-consumption, and it is doing this (1) because it wants "world primacy", and (2) because that's the kind of society communism is. Yet not a single sentence is quoted from any Soviet speech or document, past or present, justifying the statement that the Soviet Union is out ultimately to conquer the world.

In another part of the book we are told that the Soviet Union was peaceful in those pre-war days when it was developing its five-year plans. When, then, did it go in for aggression? Here our old friend the "power vacuum" comes in again. There was after the Second World War a "power vacuum in Eastern Europe" and there were "evident opportunities for communism in China". So Stalin was tempted and he fell. He could have inaugurated an era of high mass-consumption. Instead "he gave a high priority to expanding Soviet power in the world arena."

Think back to 1946. The Soviet Union had half of its industry destroyed in the war. It was to take it four years to restore its industry, all round, to the pre-war level. It was at this moment that Churchill in his famous Fulton speech outlined the anti-Soviet cold-war policy; it was in this year (1946) that Britain and America commenced to object to the amount of reparations that the Soviet Union was seeking to extract from Germany; it was in this year that the United States began to incite the bourgeoisie in France, Italy and Czechoslovakia to drive the Communists out of the government. (When two years later the working class of Czechoslovakia drove the bourgeoisie out of the government, this was represented as Soviet aggression.) The following year (1947) was to see the inauguration of the Marshall Plan, with its attempt to detach the governments of Eastern Europe from the Soviet Union. Rostow will have it that the United States was entirely peaceful in this period. It was of course actually demobilising a lot of its infantry, but he fails to mention it was flaunting its air- and sea-power and engaging in atomic blackmail. The later stage of United States strategy, the rebuilding of German militarism, and the Dulles policy of "liberation" are not of course mentioned.

The Nuclear Stalemate

However, Rostow now recognises that "there is, at least, interim stalemate", and proceeds to discuss what to do next. A new situation, he holds, has come into existence because it is a nuclear stalemate. The Soviet Union, he holds, has an interest in stopping the extension of nuclear weapons to new states because such an extension would make nuclear war most likely. Ignoring the powerful efforts of the Soviet Union to get an agreement on the banning of nuclear weapons,

with appropriate control, Rostow stresses the alleged difficulties of persuading the Soviet Union to accept that policy. Why? Because the success of this policy would lead to the possibility of a large-scale increase in consumer goods in the Soviet Union, and "communism is likely to wither in an age of high mass-consumption". Why this should be is never explained. So far from fearing this era of high mass-consumption, the Soviet Union, as we have pointed out, is striving to reach it at the earliest possible moment.

War Danger Now

Leaving communism to wither amidst a plethora of consumer goods, Rostow says that even if there was a disarmament agreement between the Soviet Union and the Western Powers there would still be the danger of war. This would come from China, South-East Asia and Latin America in the not so distant future when they would become mature industrial nations. So Rostow suggests that the Soviet Union should co-operate with the imperialist states—he calls them "the great mature nations of the north"—in order to prevent China from following in the footsteps of "the Kaiser and Hitler and the Japanese militarists and Stalin". (Note that the Soviet Union, which was attacked in the Second World War, is bracketed with the imperialists who started the war.)

Here, however, the United States imperialist attitude to China is expressed in all its arrogant crudity. Consider the sequence. The United States emerges from the Second World War as the dominant power in the Pacific. It aims to reduce all China to the status of an obedient satellite, governed in American interests by the Chiang Kai-shek clique. When the Chinese revolution dispels this pipe-dream, the U.S. Navy is sent to protect Chiang Kai-shek in Formosa. Truman declares that the United States Navy and Air Force will attack the forces of the Chinese People's Republic should they attempt to take over Formosa (Taiwan). The United States then mobilises its European and Latin-American client states in the United Nations to support it in declaring that the Formosa clique is the real Chinese government and that the People's Republic of China must not be recognised. It then supports its puppet, Syngman Rhee, in the Korean War and virtually obliterates all the industrial establishments in North Korea. It is only prevented by the resistance of its European allies from atom bombing the North Viet-Nam forces. It stands sullenly aside when a peace is agreed to, and then U.S. advisers in South Viet-Nam encourage the government to tear up the peace treaty. Yet

Rostow pretends that the danger to peace in Asia arises, not from these American activities but from China asserting itself once it has reached industrial maturity. Isn't it curious how the "stages of growth theory" always justifies whatever policy the State Department is pursuing?

The Colonies Today

How to prevent a communist breakthrough in the uncommitted ex-colonial world occupies a considerable amount of his attention. "Societies in the transition from transitional to modern status are peculiarly vulnerable to seizure of power" [by the Communists] he says.

Firstly, there is the ruling class of the traditional society, resisting advance to modernisation, and *there is the conflict of interests and opinions amongst those groups who would move forward.* "It is in such a setting of political and social confusion . . . that the seizure of power by communist conspiracy is easiest." Why call it communist conspiracy? Why not seizure of power by a communist mass movement, or by a democratic mass movement led by the Communists. "For those who would prefer to see the aspiring societies of the world not follow this particular road to modernisation—in Asia, the Middle East, African and Latin America—the communist technique for mobilising power and resources poses a formidable problem, almost certainly what historians would judge the central challenge of our time; that is, the challenge of creating, in associating with the non-Communist politicians and peoples of the pre-conditions and early take-off areas, a partnership which will see them through into sustained growth on a political and social basis which keeps open the possibilities of progressive democratic development."

Look around the world at the American client states—South Korea, Formosa, South Viet-Nam, Siam, Pakistan, Persia, Turkey, Greece, Saudi Arabia. Are the rulers of these states "keeping open the possibilities of progressive democratic development"? The rulers of these states are non-Communist politicians certainly. They also, however, represent the most backward, reactionary forces of the traditional society—forces which are determined to hang on to their privileges as long as possible. Indeed, wherever there are "non-Communist politicians" who seek a genuinely independent economic development for their people, who seek to loosen the grip of the American or other monopolists on their economy of their country, the State Department and the NATO states are invariably against them. Witness the hostility to the Castro regime in Cuba.

The "creation of a partnership" is a synonym

for a new type of imperialist relation between the imperialist state and the economically backward countries. What, however, is the reality? In most economically backward countries there are large-scale monopoly capitalist enterprises—oil wells, mines, plantations, etc.—from which enormous profits are extracted. Those profits find their way to the imperialist countries where they may often be used for luxury expenditure.

In other words, a surplus is drained from the under-developed country, so that it is not available for its all-round economic development. The best thing that imperialist capitalists could do to promote the development of these countries would therefore be to get off their backs and stop bleeding them white.

How are these countries to be helped to “take-off” and become fully-fledged capitalist states? In his sketch of capitalist development in the past, Rostow notes that some capitalist countries built up an agricultural or mineral surplus, which they exported. This provided the resources for their subsequent industrial development. Rostow recommends this to the present under-developed countries as a route to be followed. He forgets that such surpluses have long been in existence in many of them (Cuba’s sugar and Iran’s oil), but they have been controlled by the imperialist firms and are not available for independent economic development. Therefore a prerequisite for genuine economic development would be for the people in the under-developed countries to get control of these surpluses. However, even when some part of these surpluses are in possession of the inhabitants (or a section of them) the advice to further the development of their agricultural or extractive industries as a first step, is by no means correct. In another section of the book Rostow alleges that capitalism has now acquired the techniques for mitigating economic crises. Well, in the recent economic crisis, it was clearly revealed that it had not lost its skill in transferring the lion’s share of the burden of the crisis on to the shoulders of the under-developed countries. Such countries in the sterling area lost as much in the course of a year through the fall in the price of their food and raw materials, as they received in the form of “economic aid” in the whole post-war period. They have by no means recovered, and it is likely that the chronic agrarian crisis which was such a feature of the period between the wars has again emerged as far as agriculture (food and raw material crops) is concerned. For a mass of countries to make their main object the increase of agricultural crops for export might only aggravate this crisis. Those countries have therefore every reason to be sus-

picious of any advice which seeks to get them to defer industrialisation meantime, until they have developed their agricultural production further. Under the new Rostow dispensation of partnership with “the mature countries of the north” it appears that they are expected to fulfil their old function of being raw material appendages to the capitalist states, united to exploit the former colonies in a new way.

So the underdeveloped countries are (1) expected to carry a lot of their semi-feudal rulers on their backs, (2) to sell their food and materials at crisis prices, (3) to carry the elements of a new capitalist class on their backs, and (4) to pay tribute to the old imperialist companies on their territory, (5) to invite new ones to participate in their development, and (6) ultimately to industrialise.

Yet all history demonstrates that for a state which tolerates a monstrous weight of parasitism, to attempt to industrialise is to impose the bitterest poverty on the mass of its people, and this bitter poverty will exist alongside the most monstrous luxury. What a hope Rostow has if he believes that this perspective will attract under-developed countries away from a genuine colonial liberation policy.

The Essence of Rostow

What is the essence of this theory of the stages of economic growth? It is simply to take away from the political and economic development of capitalism all the contradictions and to present that development as being devoid of exploitation, class struggle, and the oppression of the majority of the people. It ignores the cost of the development of the productive power of a capitalist society in terms of the poverty and suffering of the mass of the people. It ignores the extent to which the robbery of colonial countries provided the resources for capitalist accumulation in the early stages of capitalism and its monopoly capitalist phase. Although the monopoly stage of capitalism is accompanied by tariff wars, exclusive rights to exploit colonies, special rights to export capital, super-profits for capitalist enterprises settled in colonies, and although all this was accompanied by a fierce arms race and political reaction, Rostow seeks to exonerate monopoly capitalism from responsibility for the great wars of this century, and blames it all on feudal hangovers in various countries. How he explains the ferocious imperialism of France, which had fewer feudal hangovers than most other countries, we are not told.

Rostow’s theory is that as capitalism develops the class struggle grows milder (exemplified no doubt in the four-month United States steel

strike), and it enters an era of high mass-consumption. How then does he explain the great depression of the 1930's? He tells us "the protracted depression of the United States in the 1930's was not due to long-term diminishing returns [i.e., to a steady fall in the rate of profit], but to a failure to create an initial setting of full employment, through public policy, which would have permitted the new leading sectors of suburban housing, the diffusion of automobiles, durable consumer goods and services to roll forward beyond 1929." Well, didn't Roosevelt try to do a lot in the way of a public employment policy, and yet, according to Rostow, there were still "17 per cent unemployed on the eve of the Second World War". How did the American monopoly capitalist economy get out of this situation? We are told that "the Second World War was a sort of *deus ex machina* which brought the United States back to full employment; and in the context of the post-war world—its institutional arrangements drastically altered by the New Deal and such legislation as that put through for veterans' housing—the United States went on to round out the durable consumer goods revolution in a decade of chronic full employment between, say, 1946 and 1956." How forgetful can one get? The role of veterans' housing in full employment is mentioned and not the role of the gigantic arms programme, which spent the equivalent every year of the entire national income of Britain. Is this omission because mention of the militarisation of the economy would not square with his picture of a peaceful monopoly capitalism? What of the crisis of 1957-58? Despite the militarisation of the economy, unemployment grew to 8 million—the severest crisis of the post-war world—and it has left behind a permanent army of about 3½ million unemployed in the "era of high consumption". Could not a

severer crisis than that of 1957-58 occur? The answer is "that the sluggish and timid policies of the 1920's and 1930's will no longer be tolerated in Western societies." But the 8 million unemployed appeared in 1957-58 whether tolerated or not, and 3½ million exist in the boom, i.e., the equivalent of one and one-sixth million in British conditions.

What Rostow is preaching to the world is something like this: If one ignores the seamier sides of American society, it cannot be denied that the population enjoys a fairly high standard of life. This we have reached under a capitalist system of society. You can do the same if you tolerate a capitalist system of society and don't seek a non-capitalist way of development. In all this the specific features of American development are left out. The empty continent, the profusion of easily worked raw materials, the flood of European capital (up to the First World War), the recurring shortages of labour (is this likely to happen in any ex-colonial country?), the gigantic profits made from the European capitalist states in the First and in the early part of the Second World War, all this enabled the Americans to achieve a fairly high standard of life (subject to terrifying personal insecurity), while carrying a profit-hungry capitalist class on their backs. These conditions are not present in the overcrowded colonial lands. To carry a huge burden of capitalist parasitism there is to accept terrifying poverty and to slow up development. No, the way to advance in the colonies and in Europe is to throw the parasites off our back and by eliminating them speed the way to planned growth in the interests of all. The Rostow theory is not a new theory of human development. It is simply a new theology of the cold war and as such it should be rejected.

Marxism and African Liberation*

N. Numade

IT has long been the tradition of Western imperialists to cover their robbery and exploitation in Africa under the cloak of some benevolent missionary work. When Britain, France, Belgium, Portugal and Germany carved up our continent and subjected the African people to oppression, exploitation and racial discrimination, it was under the pretext that they were bringing light to dark Africa, civilisation and economic upliftment to the barbaric people. Their motives, they claimed, were unselfish and laudable. In actual fact, once they had entrenched themselves and dispossessed the people, none of these benefits were forthcoming. The people were kept ignorant and poor. Tribal and other outworn institutions were deliberately preserved by the imperialists to facilitate the exploitation and oppression of the people.

The bourgeoisie of the imperialist countries, who in their own countries had led the struggle against feudalism, and rallied the masses behind slogans of democracy and nationalism, became the defenders of feudalism and the enemies of democracy and nationalism in Africa. The high principles which were proclaimed as universal turned out to be only for Western Europe and North America. In Asia, Africa and South America, the same principles were trampled in the dust, in the interests of colonial exploitation and super-profits.

Today, it is no longer possible to deny the African people democratic rights and independence. But the imperialist bourgeoisie is still up to its old tricks. They have appointed themselves the bodyguards whose mission is to protect Africa from Communism. Directly, through the European colonial administrators, through American diplomatic and consular offices, and indirectly, through such agencies as the so-called Moral Re-armament movement and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, a continuous stream of propaganda is launched amongst the African people, preaching the horrors and mortal perils of Communism.

* From *The African Communist*, No. 2.

It is not too difficult to discern the motives behind this massive propaganda campaign. Indeed, with naive self-exposure and contempt for the intelligence of the African people, they are continually giving the game away themselves, by reiterating day-in-day-out that they are trying "to save Africa for 'the West'."

Communism and Nationalism

In these circumstances, it is somewhat surprising that not a few leaders of national liberation movements, and even trade unions, in Africa have fallen for this propaganda—so obviously designed to preserve whatever can be preserved from the wreck of colonialism in Africa. One would have thought, perhaps, that so many years of bitter experience would have taught us to understand that when our colonial masters are anxious to warn us against some "grave danger", that "danger" is likely to be something which can help us in our demands for freedom and independence.

No doubt, some of the Africans who are so eagerly echoing the parrot cry of anti-Communism, are nothing but stooges and paid interpreters of their masters' voice. But when one hears patriotic African leaders thoughtlessly echoing the anti-Communist trash produced for our consumption by the State Department and the various colonial offices, then one must realise that one has to face here a fundamental misconception.

They imagine that Communism is in conflict with African nationalism and the liberation of our continent, because they believe that Communism will divide the African people along class lines, and will introduce a remote and irrelevant issue—that of an unreal and academic dispute about our future economic system—when all our energies should be united and directed to a single purpose, the emancipation of our continent from alien rule.

That such gross misunderstandings of the nature of Marxist-Leninist theory, and the role of Communists, are seriously believed by responsible African leaders, shows only how well the imperialists have succeeded in screening Africa from the truth about the profound teachings of Communism, and in palming off their own grotesque

distortions as the real article. It is high time, indeed, that a journal such as *The African Communist* made its appearance, so that our people can judge Marxism not by the slanderous allegations of the imperialists—the common enemy of socialism and African liberation—but by what the Marxists have to say for themselves.

Neither in theory nor in practice is there any basis for the allegation that there is some sort of clash or incompatibility between the aims and activities of African Communists and those of other patriotic Africans seeking the emancipation of Africa from colonialism and racial discrimination, and the advance of her people to unity and equality among the nations of the world.

Certainly, Communists are internationalists, looking forward to a future of brotherhood of man all over the world. But that does not mean that any Communist who is a member of an oppressed nation can for one moment be indifferent to the sufferings and humiliations of his fellows, who daily feel the brunt of discrimination, and the denial of democracy and human rights. On the contrary, he will participate, with all his heart and soul, in the struggle of his people for national salvation, as the key and the condition to all future advance. Any person who stands aloof from this struggle, who confines himself to preaching generalisations about socialism, is not a Marxist at all but a mere parlour-Socialist. *The fact that a man is a Communist makes him not a worse but a better fighter for the freedom of his people from national oppression.*

United Front for Liberation

Marxism-Leninism, dialectical materialism, is not an abstract dogma but a living historical science which calls upon all its supporters to study the concrete historical situation in which they find themselves. In conditions of national oppression, of colonial domination and racial discrimination, the first duty of every Communist is to fight *unconditionally and unreservedly* for a complete emancipation from all forms of domination and oppression, for the building of a *united front of national liberation*. Such a united front should consist not only of workers and peasants, but also of patriotic intellectuals, professional people, and even large sections of the capitalist class who are opposed to the oppression of their people. Working unselfishly and wholeheartedly to maintain and extend the strength and unity of such a national liberation movement, the Communists do so not only because it is the condition of and the key to the future advance of socialism, but also because, as sons of the toiling masses, they under-

stand the burning needs of the people for national dignity, equality and freedom.

Sometimes it is asserted by the opponents of Marxism that Communists merely attempt to “use” the national liberation and democratic movements for their own purposes. This unworthy slander is refuted not only by heroic sacrifices and contributions made to the common cause by Communists in Africa, and all over the world, but also by a consideration of the basic theory of Marxism-Leninism itself. The point is well expressed in the new textbook *Foundations of Marxism-Leninism* recently published by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, under the editorship of the veteran workers’ leader Otto Kuusinen. It declares:

“It would be wrong to regard the democratic movements as a simple means for bringing the masses to socialist revolution. It would be wrong first of all because they are of tremendous importance as *independent* movements for the people in general and for the working class in particular. Is the struggle for peace, against nuclear destruction, to be regarded solely as a reserve means? Is it not one of the principal aims of the democrats and progressive mankind as a whole? The same is true of the struggle against fascism and the shameful colonialism. . . . Each Communist, each class-conscious worker, should never lose sight of the ultimate aims of the working class movement. But this does not make him any less conscious and less selfless in fighting for the immediate interests of the people, for such demands as peace, democracy, national independence and sovereignty. Not every democrat by a long way is a supporter of socialism. But every politically conscious fighter for socialism is a consistent defender of democracy, of all the democratic interests of the working people.”

“You Communists,” say some of our ill-informed critics, “seek to divide our people along class lines, whereas we should all be united as Africans.” It is not the Communists, but the inevitable march of history, which divides nations and peoples along class lines. This will always be the case until the achievement of socialism and classless society. Instead of blaming the Communists for the inevitable process of history, the critics would do better to study concretely the nature and role of the various classes that exist in Africa. Naturally, conditions differ from one African territory to another, depending upon a number of factors, such as which European power has colonised a particular territory, the degree of white settlement and economic development, the extent to which the static, sleeping tribal societies have been disrupted and broken up. By making allowances for wide variations and local differ-

ences, it is possible to generalise broadly about the existence of various classes in our continent.

Classes in Society

In general, we may say that the path of economic development and differentiation of classes has not taken exactly the same shape in Africa as it has in the classic countries of capitalism, West Europe and North America. This is because imperialism itself—for so many years, vital formative years, the dominating influence in by far the greater part of our continent—has deliberately retarded, distorted, and suppressed the normal economic and political development of the continent.

The colonisers have dispossessed the people from the land, and destroyed their traditional means of livelihood in order to convert the African masses into cheap labour fodder for their mines, plantations and other enterprises, all of which were concerned merely with extracting the natural wealth of Africa and exporting it overseas, for their own use. Following their policy of divide and rule, they have maintained and perpetuated outworn institutions which no longer have any real meaning for millions of people, in order to maintain “indirect rule” through tribal chiefs who often have become little more than officials of colonial powers. They have deliberately retarded and suppressed indigenous development and industrialisation.

As a result, we find the most numerous class in Africa is composed of millions of people, living on the land, but usually without any land of their own, trying to scratch a precarious living from the soil. Living to varying degrees in conditions of tribalism, ground down by ignorance, poverty and disease, preoccupied with the superhuman struggle for a bare existence, this vast class is the mass basis of the great army of African liberation, the soul of the regeneration of Africa. Its interests and its future are the interests and the future of the continent. Aroused, and given dynamic leadership, the Africans of the rural hinterland will prove an invincible and determined army of freedom fighters. But, in the nature of things, we cannot often hope or expect to find the leadership of the African revolution emerging from the heartlands of tribal society.

They look for awakening, for enlightenment and leadership, to the people of the towns. Who are the people of the towns? They are, firstly, the capitalists; secondly, the professional people and intellectuals; thirdly, the working class.

In most parts of Africa, amongst the *capitalists*, you will find few big manufacturing and financial elements of the type which dominate

the European or North American bourgeoisie. This is because the colonialists have been concerned to keep control of all large enterprises, particularly mining, manufacture and finance, in their own hands. Even in areas of relatively high industrial development, such as South Africa and Rhodesia, the European minority dominates all positions of importance in the capitalist world. Rarely does one find an African manufacturer who is not also working with his employees, who themselves are usually very few. The same applies to all or nearly all important positions in trade and commerce.

Few Africans have been allowed to become important figures as wholesalers or large-scale merchants. Usually one finds them only as petty traders, small shop-keepers and hawkers. Only in the north, in such countries as Egypt, can one find an indigenous class of big bourgeoisie. In most parts of Africa, one finds this bourgeois class playing an advanced and progressive role in the struggle against colonialism. Imperialism stands in the way of the development of the African capitalists as a class. The colonialists preserve jealously exclusive rights and privileges to all the best places in the sun for themselves, and prevent the nascent African capitalist from taking what he regards as his rightful place in society. The colonial system keeps the masses of people poor, retards industrialisation, and thus prevents the growth of an adequate home market.

Of course, I should add here, what is under discussion is not the behaviour and motives of each individual, but broad general trends existing amongst classes. Certainly, many Africans from a capitalist background have been and still are loyal and true sons of Africa, activated by the broad interests of the suffering masses with whom they identify themselves, and not by selfish or class interests only.

The support of the patriotic element of the African capitalist class is essential for speedy victory against colonialism. But there are aspects of this class, and elements amongst it, which make it a very unsatisfactory *leader* of the African revolution. True, the support of the capitalist class, or the patriotic elements amongst it, is invaluable, for they can and do provide the financial backing which is needed to run properly organised offices and professional staff for the liberation movement, to open and maintain newspapers, and all other things for which money is required. Also, as businesslike people, they are capable of providing the efficiency and attention to detail and daily routine which are so often sadly lacking in our movements.

But the capitalist elements are apt to be narrow.

selfishly hidebound and conservative. They are apt to be guided not by the general interests of the masses but by their own special, minority class interests. Often they are parochial, chauvinistic, tribalistic, and lacking in broad vision. They are usually opportunist, tend to compromise with the colonialists for small gains at the sacrifice of principle, because they fear the revolutionary activities of the masses of workers and rural people. Also, it has been repeatedly observed, certain elements amongst the bourgeoisie in a colonial country tend to compromise with imperialism and sell out to it.

While they share a common national outlook with the masses of African workers and peasants, they also share a common capitalist outlook with the colonialists. They are tied, sometimes, to imperialism by a thousand strings of dependence and mutual interest. They share with the colonialists the destructive and vicious ideology of a morbid fear of Communism and the masses of the people. For this reason it has happened, time and again in this period of history, that the compromising section of the bourgeoisie has sold out to imperialism and betrayed the interests of the masses of the people. These are some of the reasons which make the bourgeoisie an unsatisfactory leader of the colonial revolution.

Professional Classes

What about the professional classes and intellectuals? The doctors, lawyers, teachers and clerks and others who exist in every town in our continent? We must pay ungrudging tribute to the magnificent contributions which thus far have been made to the cause of African emancipation by men and women from this class throughout our continent. They have been the founders of our national liberation movements, and have carried the spark of enlightenment and rebellion from one end of Africa to the other. Many have studied abroad, even settled abroad, and then given up a life of ease and comfort, and of human dignity let it be remembered, in order to come back and to share the trials, hardships and dangers of the political movements amongst the masses of their people.

At the same time, it must be remembered that, considered as a class, this African "intelligentsia" does not constitute a stable and homogeneous group. It is not, properly speaking, an independent economic class at all. For from it have been drawn not only the revolutionary and patriotic leaders of our liberation movements, but also the cadres of colonialism: the clerks, interpreters, and officials, without whose aid colonialism would be unable to continue its rule and maintain its administration in Africa. In conditions of modern

society, the intellectuals occupy a position midway between the rulers and the ruled, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

Some of them have chosen, unhesitatingly, the cause of the working people, and stuck to it loyally, come what may. Others serve openly and willingly the cause of the oppressors. They swallow uncritically the ideology and outlook of the colonialists; they learn to have contempt for their own people; they even, as teachers, often do the dirty job of inoculating into young Africans the hateful principles of subservience and self-contempt. Many of these intellectuals vacillate between one camp and another, are always swinging helplessly between the oppressors and the oppressed. Amongst fellow-Africans in the liberation movement they pose as the most radical and uncompromising of revolutionaries, ceaselessly calling for action, for desperate adventures, and swearing to destroy the colonialists. Yet at different times the very same people can be observed hobnobbing with the most reactionary elements amongst the colonial officials, and shamelessly sneering at the alleged shortcomings of the African peoples.

Though we must pay the most sincere homage and tribute, therefore, to those many African leaders of great stature who have emerged from this group, we must remember that as a group it is inherently unstable and unfit for leadership. It is for the members of this group, each individually, and all of them together as a group, to choose which side they are on—that of the masses of workers and peasants, or that of the exploiters. Every great African leader who has emerged from the ranks of the intelligentsia has achieved greatness only because he has unswervingly and completely aligned himself with the masses.

The Working Class

Finally, we come to the African working class, the proletariat. Except in some of the areas of greater industrialisation, where African workers, miners and landless farm labourers working on plantations, have come into being, the African working class is numerically small in most parts of our continent. Yet it is the class of the future, for every day it is growing in numbers, wisdom and maturity as industrialisation spreads in Africa, disrupting the old sleeping tribal societies and sending forth the sons and daughters of Africa as workers, people who have no means of livelihood, and nothing to sell except their labour power.

The conditions of its life and labour make the African working class the most revolutionary, dynamic and far-seeing group amongst all our people. The working class is homogeneous. Un-

like sections of the bourgeoisie, it looks beyond formal political independence. It does not seek merely to replace a group of white exploiters with another group of black ones. It looks forward to a life of greater happiness, of higher material and cultural standards, of progress and prosperity for all Africans, above all for the toiling masses also in the rural areas from which they spring. The African working class is the ideal leader in the great progress and onward march of the masses to build a new Africa.

The Communist Party

But in order to fulfil this historic role, it is necessary that the working class should be organised and trained in the most modern and advanced principles of social science. It should be organised, industrially, in trade unions which can be a powerful and indispensable weapon and partner in the movement for the national liberation of our continent. And they should be organised in their own political party, a party based upon the wise and far-seeing scientific principles of Marxism-Leninism, a Communist Party.

The Communist Party is the highest form of working-class organisation. It selects only the best members of the working class, those who have proved their loyalty, courage and determination in political work. The party is highly disciplined. Every member is a student who learns more about Marxist theory and enriches this theory by studying local conditions and applying it to them. Every member of the Party is an activist who puts into practice what he learns and studies.

Membership of the Communist Party is not necessarily confined to members of the proletariat. This is particularly important in Africa where we have already said that the proletariat is at present very small in relation to the other classes. A person may by trade be a worker, and yet in fact be under the influence of bourgeois nationalist or other anti-working-class ideology. Sometimes trade union leaders, for example, may become opportunistic in their outlook because of the need constantly to reach compromise agreements with the bosses, and because they lack training in the theories and principles of the class struggle. On the other hand, many people of bourgeois, peasant or petty-bourgeois origin can become valuable members of the Communist Party and firm supporters of the working class if they accept the ideology of the working class and base their deeds on the policies and needs of the working class.

During the period of struggle against imperialism the national bourgeoisie, and even the feudal chiefs and princes, may be the allies of the working class in the struggle against imperialism. However, after the overthrow of imperialism a section of the national bourgeoisie may have ties with foreign imperialism and may betray the national revolution, may not seek a complete break with imperialism. The working class on the other hand will seek a complete break with imperialism and capitalist exploitation. They will seek to win the patriotic national bourgeoisie into a stronger and firmer alliance with the workers and peasants and isolate the treacherous section of the bourgeoisie which has ties with foreign imperialism. The working class will seek to win the broad masses of the revolutionary land-hungry peasantry in a way which will enable them to complete the agrarian revolution and redivide the land.

The need for a revolutionary vanguard which will lead the working class to destroy exploitation is as great in Africa today as it was in Asia. The treachery of the imperialists can convert the independence of African states into an empty symbol by granting political independence and continuing the ruthless exploitation of the peoples through the national bourgeoisie. It is this which the imperialists hope to do when they say they want to "save Africa for the West".

In struggling against imperialism the working class must always avoid two errors. The first is to allow the bourgeoisie to dominate their leadership. The second is to try and impose exclusively working-class leadership and programmes on the national movement. Both these errors would weaken the struggle of the working class for socialism. In the first instance the power of the national bourgeoisie will be used to curb militant forms of action because they fear that if this should happen the revolution might be carried beyond their interests. The second error is one of sectarianism, which undermines the unity of the various classes and is bound to create internal conflicts, thus diverting the attention of the people from their common enemy—imperialism.

Guided by the theory of Marxism-Leninism and the accumulated experience of the workers of the whole world, the Communist Parties in the various colonial countries and independent states can lead the African people against imperialism either of the old form or the "new" form, which the imperialists seek to maintain under the cloak of "protecting Africa from Communism".

The Use of Cybernetics in Sociology

E. A. Arab-Ogly

CYBERNETICS is fifteen years old, and Norbert Wiener's work is ten—*La cybernétique, ou contrôle et communication chez l'animal et dans la machine* (cybernetics, or control and communication in animals and in machines). This work immediately drew the attention of the whole scientific world to this new and extremely promising branch of science.

Cybernetics—or the theory of automatically controlled systems, of the general principles (logical and mathematical) of command and control in machines, living beings and society—has quickly won a place for itself in science and has been able to record important theoretical and practical successes. We may mention in the first place the idea and utilisation of machines for calculation and analysis, and a variety of automatic machines. A good many of the ideas and principles of cybernetics and even its methodology are having a fruitful influence in biology; they are stimulating the development of the physiology of the higher nervous system, of genetics and ecology. Unfortunately the same cannot be said of sociology or the social sciences in general. Up to the present, the use made by these sciences of the results of cybernetics has been retarded not only by the difficulties inherent in applying them in these fields, but also by a whole series of prejudices. This is all the more the case because these prejudices find fertile ground in the tendentious publicity which is often linked with the attempts made in this direction by contemporary bourgeois sociology.

Nevertheless, the very development of cybernetics objectively impels it to penetrate—though as yet timidly—the field of sociology. This “invasion” poses the following problems to the science of society:

1. How can sociology utilise the practical results obtained by cybernetics; in other words, what is the significance of the application of cybernetics in the social sciences?
2. Can we consider justified, and within what limits, the analogies which have been established between certain processes which take place within society and those observed in automatic control systems; in other words, what is the theoretical significance of cybernetics for the social sciences?

3. How is sociology to reflect the changes brought about in society by the widespread introduction of the results of cybernetics in daily life; in other words, what are the social results of the automating of production?

The present article is an attempt to give the answer to the first of these questions.

The Frankenstein Monster

An incredible event took place at the end of the eighteenth century. A brilliant student of the town of Ingolstadt, Victor Frankenstein, as a result of much thought and tenacious effort, succeeded in penetrating the secrets of nature: he achieved the construction of an artificial man, to which he gave life. But this man, endowed by his maker with colossal physical strength and capacities of extraordinary range, refused to obey Frankenstein. He became the evil genius of mankind, and his path was strewn with terrible crimes for which he was in no way responsible. Cursing his invention, Frankenstein vainly sought to rid the world of it and by that act too to salve his conscience. To everyone's satisfaction, and because it could find no further way of displaying its evil nature, the demon destroyed itself.

This astounding tale—if it could really happen—would make the present-day breeders of tortoises and foxes green with envy. Extremely fortunately, however, it was nothing but the fruit of the imagination of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, wife of the great English poet; her fantastic novel *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (1818) gave expression, in the then fashionable form of “terror novels”, to the state of mind of those social strata (the aristocracy, artisans and petty bourgeoisie) who were panic-stricken at the menace of total destruction which the social revolution held for the old social order and their manner of life.

The theme of Frankenstein and his monster has indeed been long forgotten. But now it is once again winning popularity in the Western capitalist world. And moreover, because of the success of cybernetics, this theme has migrated from fictional literature to works of science and vulgarisation dealing with this science. Even in specialised works and in scientific conferences the Frankenstein monsters, whenever

the application of cybernetics in sociology is discussed, make their appearance on the stage, and fears for the future of humanity are openly or covertly expressed.

R. Ruyer, for example, writes that automata awoken in man "above all, fear. . . . The mechanical imitation of the situation of Frankenstein and his monster brings with it the same horror" (R. Ruyer, *La cybernétique et l'origine de l'information*, Paris, 1954, pp. 29-30). According to this writer, nothing good can be expected to come of the application of cybernetics to society, to the sociology of man. God grant, he exclaims, that man will not learn to foresee the future with the aid of calculating machines, as he has learnt to foresee the weather. "Tyrants of other times", he adds, "have had their astrologer. We can imagine tyrants of the future consulting their 'electronic brain', capable of working out infallible strategical calculations. An all-powerful Head of State who calculates the risks of a war fortunately knows that he may be deceiving himself. But if a logistic machine reaches the infallible conclusion that war is advantageous, it will be more difficult for the tyrant to resist temptation" (p.30).

Fear has indeed a remarkable capacity for exaggerating things! Ruyer's arguments are astonishingly superficial—unless they are an example of a skilful attempt to terrify the reader at the idea of applying the results of cybernetics to the social sciences. For in fact whatever the improved features with which such a machine may be endowed, its possibilities will remain strictly limited to the analysis and solution of only those problems which are expressed, or can be expressed, in mathematical form (quantitative). In military science in particular, where the use of these machines at once attained considerable scope, they help, for example, in settling the best organisation of defence against air attack or of maritime convoys; they can calculate the trajectory of a ballistic rocket or the maximum load for a railway line, fix the military potential, even bring out the superiority of one mobilisation plan as against another, and so on. All of these calculations have an indubitable effect on operational plans and even on strategy. But it will never enter into the head of any experienced officer to believe that they are enough to determine the outcome of a war; for is it possible to express in mathematical terms, and consequently to calculate, the influence of foreign policy, the fighting spirit of the troops, the ability of the commanding officers, the effects of surprise, etc.?¹

Today, now that the epoch of tyrants and of wars is irretrievably buried in the past, it is quite simply absurd to imagine, as Ruyer does, that the application of cybernetics to the social sciences will inevitably bring with it new wars. Nevertheless such panic fears are expressed not only by Dubarle, who

prophesies the invention before long of colossal demoniacal machines destined to govern society, machines which will crush the liberty of the individual and will "play at men" as they already play at chess. N. Wiener himself, who cites these assertions, permits himself to be led into reflections on how it will be possible to prevent the application of cybernetics to sociology leading to the disappearance of democracy and the establishment of fascism.²

The "Governing Machine"

The famous "governing machine" has become a kind of obsession for a certain number of scientists. Thus, one of the founders of cybernetics, William Ross Ashby, when he had constructed a homeostat (primitive model of the "electronic brain"), reached the conclusion that it would be possible to construct an electronic machine of extraordinary complexity whose capabilities would surpass those of the human brain and which would resolve many of our difficulties and blunders of today. And giving free rein to his imagination, he described the social consequences of the use of such machines: "The world's political and economic problems, for instance, seem sometimes to involve complexities beyond even the experts. Such a machine might perhaps be fed with vast tables of statistics, with volumes of scientific facts and other data, so that after a time it might emit as output a vast and intricate set of instructions, rather meaningless to those who had to obey them, yet leading, in

¹ Imagine for a moment that in the autumn of 1956, before their aggression in Egypt, the French and British imperialists had decided to have recourse to the "advice" of a calculating machine. The superiority of the Franco-British army, which had modern weapons, fighting experience, the support of a powerful fleet and supremacy in the air—this superiority over the small Egyptian army was so obvious that the "intelligent machine" would clearly have foretold that the interventionists would be victorious (in any case in an operation so limited as the occupation of the Suez Canal zone). But the machine would have been "led into error" by the incorrect limits set to the problem presented to it: for example, the hope of the interventionists that the Soviet Union, because of the Hungarian disturbances, and the United States, because of the electoral campaign, would stand aside, and that world public opinion would thus be presented with an accomplished fact. This hope was disappointed.

As a result, it was the imperialists who deceived themselves, and not the electronic machine. An analogous error was committed by the Pentagon immediately after the end of the Second World War, when the United States military experts, on the basis of calculations made by an electronic machine, arrived at the conclusion that bombing aeroplanes were to be preferred to projectile-aeroplanes. Today, with the appearance of the inter-continental ballistic rocket, it is quite clear that here, too, it was not the electronic machine, but the experts, who were unable to foresee the advance of technique.

² See N. Wiener, *Cybernétique et Société*, Paris, 1952, pp. 256-265; also P. Cossa, *La cybernétique*, Paris, 1955, p. 79.

fact, to a gradual resolving of the political and economical difficulties by its understanding and use of principles and natural laws which are to us yet obscure.”³

Reproducing this idyllic picture of the future in his book on *La pensée artificielle*, Pierre de Latil warns his readers that Ashby is not a romantic writer: “He is the most staid of scientists.” Imagining the future of humanity in the form of a new hierarchical regime, de Latil writes: “A college of experts with fabulous machines—that is how one can imagine the planetary government many centuries ahead. And the machines controlling the experts who made them. And the experts controlling the crowds in the name of the sacrosanct infallible machines. Even Wells did not invent that. . . .”⁴

We can willingly admit that in their dreams of the future of humanity, cyberneticians like Ashby and Latil have surpassed Wells. But the whole point is precisely that they have set out from hypotheses which are in the highest degree questionable.

There is evidently no limit to the progress of the human mind, and in particular to the perfecting of electronic machines. But even the most perfect of these (and this can be stated with confidence) will never be able to function counter to objective natural laws, or *objectively* to solve insoluble problems.

Social Problems

When Ashby or Latil assert that the mythical “governing machine” will be able to resolve all the social problems of contemporary capitalism, they are committing an elementary confusion of thought. Such an idea is nothing but the illusion of the Pharisee who naively believes that crises, unemployment, high prices and taxes, wars and other “difficulties” from which he is suffering, arise from the incompetence of the government or the corruption of officials. The electronic machine, even in the most distant future, will no more be able to “resolve” these contradictions inherent in capitalism than to resolve the problem of perpetual motion, for example, or the creation of matter out of nothing. To resolve these contradictions, in fact—or in other words to create new openings for capitalism, to suppress competition and anarchy in production—is beyond the capacities of any machine whatsoever. They can only be resolved by transforming society and basing it on socialist principles. And in order to understand this, it is in no way necessary to have recourse to advice from an “electronic brain”. But let us assume that this machine invites the United States Government to socialise the means of production, or even, as a palliative, to

raise the real wages of the workers and carry out a great housing programme. Would it not be naive to believe that the capitalists would follow advice of this sort? The policy of Governments is not determined by good advice and pious wishes, but on the basis of the fundamental interests of the socially dominant class. This is an elementary sociological truth.

Cyberneticians as a rule compare electronic calculating machines with the isolated individual. Certainly such a machine can carry out in a week calculations that a thousand mathematicians could not finish in a year. But humanity is not composed only of mathematicians, and its functions are not limited to mathematical calculations alone. Whatever the perfection reached by a machine in carrying out one particular function in comparison with the results achieved by a man, the collective intelligence of humanity surpasses all electronic machines; the latter are nothing but technical means used by science, created by man and subject to him.

Another proposition of Ashby’s seems to have equally little basis, namely, that a time will come when the operations carried out by electronic machines, and their method of working, will become impenetrable even for the scientists who have constructed them and who will lay down their programmes of work. This is quite simply a modern variant of the theme of Frankenstein and his monster. But the need to construct “electronic brains” and to plan their operations presupposes precisely that their method of working will never be a mystery for man. After making a detailed analysis of the hypothesis of an eventual “liberation” of electronic machines from the power of man, the French scientist A. Ducrocq reached this perfectly logical conclusion: “So long as steel and coal are used in the construction of what today we call robots, we shall never get more than an artificial world dependent on man, any pretended revolt of the robots being possible only in imagination”.⁵

But nevertheless Ashby outlines this gloomy prospect for humanity: “But perhaps the most serious danger in such a machine will be its selfishness. . . . In the early stages of its training we shall doubtless condition it heavily to act so as to benefit ourselves as much as possible. But if the machine really develops its own powers, it is bound sooner or later to recover from this. If now such a machine is used for large scale social planning and co-ordination, we must not be surprised if we find after a time that the streams of orders, plans and directives issuing from it begin to pay increased attention to securing its own welfare . . . we could hardly object if we find that more and more of the national bud-

³ W. R. Ashby, “Design for a Brain”, *Electronic Engineering*, Vol. 20, No. 250, p. 383.

⁴ P. de Latil, *La Pensée artificielle*, Paris, 1954, pp. 285-286.

⁵ A. Ducrocq, *Découverte de la cybernétique*, Paris, 1955, p. 238.

get (planned by the machine) is being devoted to ever increasing developments of the planning machine. In the spite of plans and directives issuing from it we might hardly notice that the automatic valve making factories are to be moved so as to deliver directly into its own automatic valve-replacing gear; we might hardly notice that its new power supplies are to come directly from its own automatic atomic piles; we might not realise that it had already decided that its human attendants are no longer necessary.”⁶

Reactionary Conclusions

This fantastic hypothesis made by Ashby, an outstanding experimenter and scientist, one of the founders of cybernetics—and one who in no way claims infallibility for his incursions into sociology—has been made use of by many representatives of “social cybernetics” for openly reactionary ends. Ashby’s hypothetical observations are interpreted in their books and articles as categorical affirmations, as the fatal destiny inevitably awaiting humanity. Thus Cleator, in his *The Robot Era*, presents the future of humanity in the form of a universal asylum in which men, degraded both physically and morally, will be the impotent pensioners of the all-powerful electronic robots. In the third part of his work, under the sensational title “Machines minus Men”, he declares that step by step the robots will “become conscious” of their autonomy and their independence of men, and will escape from the control of men by seizing for themselves the sources of energy. Humanity will then perish, he writes; every attempt by human beings to prolong the species by going back to the processes of multiplication that have long been out of fashion will be made null and void by a process as simple as efficacious, the segregation of the sexes; those however who prefer the alternative of periodical sterilisation by a beam of neutrons will find that they are offered this possibility. Unable to delay the fatal end which is approaching, humanity will have found an unexpected immortality in the electronic reflections of the eternal mechanism, forerunner of the era of robots.⁷

Similar predictions fill the pages of d’E. Huant’s work, *Du biologique au social*; the author consciously strives to arouse in the reader fear of the future, so that he will accept the capitalism of today.⁸

It is this preaching of acceptance of the capitalist regime that constitutes in essence the social role of “social cybernetics”.

Many scientists in the capitalist countries, when they try to foretell the future of humanity and in

particular the social consequences of the results obtained by cybernetics, prove themselves incapable of passing beyond the limits of the traditional bourgeois picture of society. Capitalism with all its attributes—competition, individualism, the elimination of the weakest, wars, etc.—appears to them as the only, eternal, natural, most rational form of social relations. Nothing is more characteristic of a bourgeois, Lenin said, than to attribute the features of the present system to all times and all peoples. It is this which shows up to its full extent the narrowness of the bourgeois conception of the world, the anti-historical ideology of the bourgeoisie in general. That is why there is no occasion for surprise in the fact that John Kemeny, studying the very interesting theoretical problem of the possibility of creating machines capable of reproducing themselves, suddenly reaches the conclusion that, as a consequence of an alleged exhaustion of resources of raw materials, these machines will inevitably enter into conflict with each other, imitating in this even their creators, men.⁹ Such machines capable of reproducing themselves, if Kemeny is to be believed, will be able not only to evolve according to the laws of biology, undergo mutations, etc., but will enter into competition with each other for *Lebensraum* (living space), and will thus come to the point of killing each other.¹⁰

Control of Thought

Other equally fantastic ways of using cybernetics in sociology have been proposed. One of them consists of transforming men themselves into machines, as Curtiss B. Schaefer suggested at the autumn 1956 U.S. national conference of electronics. On the basis of experiments carried out with mice and dogs, who got hungry immediately after they had eaten or were terrified without any reason when an electric current of a particular frequency was passed through their brains, he proposed the future use of an analogous method “to control thoughts”. In his view a special science should be charged with this, under the name of “biocontrol”, a kind of synthesis of the results obtained by cybernetics in biology and the thought-control carried out in the United States by the Committee of Un-American Activities and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

“The ultimate achievement of biocontrol” says Engineer Schaefer, “may be the control of man himself. . . . Enslavement could be imposed upon the vanquished as a condition of peace, or through the threat of hydrogen bombing. Biocontrol could make this enslavement complete and final, for the controlled subjects would never be permitted to think as individuals. A few months after birth a surgeon

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 383.

⁷ P. E. Cleator, *The Robot Era*, New York, 1955, p. 157.

⁸ E. Huant, *Du biologique au social*. Outline of a cybernetic analysis of social development. Paris, 1957, pp. 66-67, 74.

⁹ J. Kemeny, “Man viewed as a Machine”, *Scientific American*, Vol. 192, No. 4, April 1955, p. 66.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 67. See also E. F. Moore, “Artificial living plant”, *Scientific American*, Vol. 195, No. 4, October 1956, p. 124.

would equip each child with a socket mounted under the scalp and electrodes reaching selected areas of brain tissue. A year or two later, a miniature radio receiver and antenna would be plugged into the socket. From this time on, the child's sensory perceptions and muscular activity could be either modified or completely controlled by bioelectric signals radiated from state-controlled transmitters. . .

"The once-human being, thus controlled, would be the cheapest of machines to create and operate. The cost of building even a simple robot, like the Westinghouse mechanical man, is probably ten times that of bearing and raising a child to the age of 16."¹¹

Such a glorious perspective for monopoly capital is not only profoundly reactionary; it is also, to tell the truth, quite chimerical. Apart from the fact that any attempt to scalp the workers intellectually in this way (like the similar mass sterilisation projects of the Neomalthusians) would inevitably come up against widespread protests and the resistance of mankind, the "control of thoughts" in itself, whatever the ideological or technical means used to put it into effect, is incapable either of making the existing system eternal or of putting a stop to social progress. For the latter depends, in the final analysis, not on the state of thought, but on the development of production. The fall of feudalism in Europe, in spite of the religious control and the Inquisition, the collapse of the Jesuit state in Paraguay, of the shogunate system in Japan and of fascism in Germany, are historical facts which bear eloquent witness to this.

The "governing machine", the fantastic world of machines capable of reproducing themselves and at the same time reproducing capitalist social relations, and finally the degradation of men to the role of helpless automata—all of these are only a few fragments of the reactionary social utopia of capitalism on its death-bed. And it is precisely as utopias that these ideas can have a certain interest for scientific research. It is when we consider these descriptions of the future as utopias that we find it easy to see the ideological symptoms of the decomposition of the capitalist regime—the pessimistic visions of the future, the consciousness of its own inevitable fate, the misanthropy, the identification of the destruction of the existing regime with that of the human race, the naive expectation of some supernatural intervention, and so forth. These features have marked the ideology of all classes which have been approaching their end; and the fact that the Second Coming of Christ has been replaced by the "governing machine" is entirely understandable and in no way alters the content of the ideological process. The scientific garb assumed by this social utopia should deceive no one. It is but a tribute rendered to the spirit of the times. Just as from the

16th to the 18th century, in the epoch of the great geographical discoveries, social utopias generally took as their scene unknown or little explored countries, so the utopias of the 20th century, in the epoch of great scientific discoveries, naturally speculate on the successes of science and technique, and in particular on those of cybernetics, that branch of knowledge which is today developing with the greatest momentum.

Retreat into Fantasy

We can justly attribute to this reactionary utopia of the cyberneticians the feature noted by the English Marxist historian, A. L. Morton, in the utopian works of contemporary bourgeois ideologists:

"In nearly all these books the main note is that of retreat—retreat into fantasy, into an unscientific exploitation of 'science', into gloom for the sake of gloom. In nearly all of them there is the abandonment of the belief that a just and decent society is possible and can grow out of existing society."¹²

Cybernetics itself as a science is clearly no more responsible for the idea of the "governing machine" than the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus is responsible for the publication of Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* or for the legend of Eldorado.

This misuse of the discoveries of cybernetics for ideological ends should not put in question the fruitful possibilities of using them in sociology. To refuse to apply cybernetics to the social sciences on the ground of the struggle against bourgeois ideology would be like trying to prohibit new geographical discoveries in order to end the production of utopias. It is precisely the successive geographical discoveries which, by exploring and filling out the last "white spots" on the maps, have at the same time blotted out the legendary utopias from the map of the world. It is in exactly the same way that the future successes of cybernetics in sociology will inevitably drive the phantom "governing machine" out of scientific literature.

With regard to the possibilities of applying cybernetics to sociology, it must be noted that the social sciences, like the natural sciences, can make considerable use of the creations of cybernetic technique such as electronic calculating machines, a variety of logistic apparatus and automatic systems of bibliography and information about scientific research in progress, translating machines, etc. The social sciences would no doubt gain even more from such use of cybernetics than the natural sciences; for their whole development depends to a much greater extent on the assembling of information in the broadest sense of the word, as well as on the marshalling of data already assembled.

¹¹ *Time*, 15th October, 1956, p. 40.

¹² A. L. Morton, *The English Utopia*, p. 208.

Lenin on Britain

J. Klugmann

TWO books published early this year¹ will be of very great help to the British reader studying the life and works of Lenin, and, in particular, Lenin's life in London and his writings on the British working-class movement. The earlier edition of *Lenin on Britain* has long been out of print, and the new edition is much more comprehensive. Krupskaya's *Reminiscences of Lenin* have also for long years been unavailable in Britain, and it is good that on this 90th anniversary of Lenin's birth the young forces in our movement can once again study this most human, intimate and inspiring account of the life of the great revolutionary leader.

Lenin in London

Lenin in all made five visits to London between 1902-1908.

He came first in the spring of 1902, arriving in mid-April. The publication of *Iskra* was meeting with all sorts of difficulties in Munich, particularly with police persecution, and it had been decided to move the Editorial Board, of which Lenin was a member, to London, subject to the agreement and aid of the British Marxists.

Lenin came with his wife Krupskaya and, for the first few weeks, took up residence in a couple of modest rooms in an apartment house near Regent Square (in the neighbourhood of Kings Cross). They moved thence into two cheaper unfurnished rooms at 30 Holford Square, in the same neighbourhood, buying the simplest of furniture—beds, tables, chairs and a few bookshelves; they lived there for about a year, with Nadezda Krupskaya keeping house, doing the shopping and cooking on an oil stove.

As soon as he arrived in London Lenin set out to improve his knowledge of English. He already had a good knowledge of the language, and had translated, in exile with Krupskaya, some voluminous tomes of the Webbs. Now he put an advertisement in a weekly paper that "a Russian doctor of

law and his wife wished to take lessons in the English language in exchange for Russian lessons", and, in this way, made contact with a Mr. Rayment (an older man, with "a venerable appearance" said to resemble Darwin) who worked for the publishing house of George Bell and Son, with an office worker named Williams, and a manual worker named Young.

Lenin did more than study the English language; he set out thoroughly to explore London and its surroundings, and to make the closest contact with the working people. Krupskaya writes:

"Ilyich studied living London. He liked taking long rides through the town on top of a bus. He liked the busy traffic of that vast commercial city, the quiet squares with their elegant houses wreathed in greenery, where only smart broughams drew up. There were other places too—mean little streets tenanted by London's work people, with clothes lines stretched across the road and anaemic children playing on the doorsteps. To these places we used to go on foot. Observing these startling contrasts between wealth and poverty, Ilyich would mutter in English between clenched teeth 'Two Nations'" (*Reminiscences of Lenin*, p. 71).

Working-class London

It was above all towards working-class London that Lenin and Krupskaya directed their steps:

"Vladimir Ilyich always felt drawn to the working class crowd. Wherever there was a crowd he was sure to be there—whether it was an outing in the country, where the tired workers, glad to escape from the city, lay about for hours on the grass, or a public house, or the reading room. . . .

"It was the rank and file British worker who had preserved his class instinct in face of everything that Ilyich always relied upon. Visitors to Britain usually saw only the labour aristocracy, corrupted by the bourgeoisie and itself bourgeoisified. Naturally, Ilyich studied that upper stratum, too . . . but he also tried to discover the motive force of the future revolution of England" (p. 72).

A very great deal of Lenin's time in London was spent working in the library of the British Museum. Lenin was living in London under the pseudonym of

¹ V. I. Lenin, *On Britain* (Lawrence & Wishart, 1960, 6s.). N. K. Krupskaya, *Reminiscences of Lenin* (Lawrence & Wishart, 1960, 8s. 6d.).

Jacob Richter. In this name Lenin applied to the Director of the British Museum for permission to use the Reading Room, accompanied by a recommendation from Mitchell, the General Secretary of the General Federation of Trade Unions, and he received his reading ticket as Jacob Richter, Doctor of Law, on April 29th, 1902.

During the whole period of his first year in London, Lenin worked continuously with the circle of Russian emigre workers that used to meet in Whitechapel. Much detail of his contacts with the Russian groups in London is given by N. A. Aleksief in his memories *V. I. Lenin in London, 1902-3* (published in Russian in *Memories of Lenin*, Vol. I. State Publishing House of Political Literature, Moscow, 1956). Comrade Aleksief is still living in Moscow and has often recounted to British comrades his reminiscences of Lenin and Krupskaya in London. Lenin led the work of a study group of Russian workers on the Programme of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party. He regularly attended the workers' circle in Whitechapel, which Aleksief describes as "in its composition a little International". Lenin often addressed the emigre workers, and he opened on November 29th, 1902, a discussion on the programme and tactics of the Social Revolutionaries. On March 18th, 1903, he spoke at an anniversary meeting of the Paris Commune. One of his last public appearances in this first visit was a speech at the May Day celebration meeting at the Alexandra Palace on May 3rd, 1903. This is advertised in *Justice* of May 2nd, but no report has so far been found of Lenin's actual appearance.

Production of "Iskra"

Lenin's main work during this period of April 1902 - May, 1903, was the production of *Iskra*. Correspondence concerning the transfer to London had begun in February or March, 1902. Aleksief recounts how he received a letter from Martov, asking him to examine the possibility of printing the paper in London at the press of the Social Democratic Federation (S.D.F.). Aleksief contacted Harry Quelch, the Editor of *Justice*, who agreed that it would be possible, and that the S.D.F. would give all help, despite the extreme limitations of space at the S.D.F. press, which was then in a small building, now the Marx Memorial Library at 37a Clerkenwell Green. The only condition made was that Russian compositors should be found to help with setting the type. As a result Lenin and the majority of members of the Board came to London. Apart from Lenin the other members of the Board lived for a period in five small rooms in Sidmouth Street, not far from Lenin's rooms in Holford Square.

The editorial work was done at 37a Clerkenwell Green, at the press of the S.D.F. In an obituary on Harry Quelch published in the first issue of *Pravda*

Truda on September 11th, 1913, Lenin recognised the help given by the British workers in the editing of *Iskra*:

"The British Social Democrats—headed by Quelch, readily made their printing plant available. As a consequence Quelch himself had to 'squeeze up': a corner had been boarded off at the print shop by a thin partition to serve him as an editorial room. This corner contained a quite small writing table, a bookshelf above it, and a chair. When the present writer visited Quelch in this 'editorial office' there was no room for another chair. . . ." (V. I. Lenin, *On Britain*, p. 186).

Later Visits

Lenin left Britain early in May 1903. He returned again in July 1903 for the Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P., which had begun its sessions in Brussels but as a result of police persecution decided to transfer to London. M. N. Lyadov, one of the delegates, tells in his *Memories of the Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.* (Moscow State Publishing House, 1959) how Lenin felt himself an "old stager" in London and acted as guide and translator for his fellow delegates. The meeting place of the Congress changed daily for conspiratorial reasons, but all the meeting places are not known. In mid-August, after the termination of the Congress, Lenin left London.

His third visit was to attend the Third Congress of the R.S.D.L.P. in April 1905. Again the exact meeting places of the Congress are not known, though it is known that Lenin stayed at 16 Percy Circus, near Kings Cross. There is a story circulated, which I have not been able to confirm, of a Scotland Yard agent hiding in a cupboard during a gathering of the delegates at the Crown and Bullpack in St. John Street being baffled by the Russian language. The fourth visit to London was in May, 1907, to attend the Fifth Congress of the R.S.D.L.P., which met at the Brotherhood Church near Southgate Road in South-West London. One of the great problems was financing the Congress, and a loan was secured from a progressive American industrialist, Joseph Fels, through the intermediary of some Labour leaders. All the delegates signed the credit note and the loan of £1,700 was duly repaid in 1922.

Lenin's last visit to London was in May, 1908, when he came for about a month to study in the British Museum, working above all on philosophy, in preparation for his great creative work against philosophical revisionism, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*. A number of memoirs recount how Lenin, like Marx before him, was attached to the library of the British Museum. Nor were those who worked there quick to forget Lenin. I remember when, as a student, I first started to work in the library in the early thirties, showing a picture of Lenin to the old

custodian at the door of the library, who prided himself on never forgetting faces. "Such a nice gentleman", he said. "What has become of him? He has not been here for a long time."²

Imperialism and the British Labour Movement

Certainly Lenin's visits to Britain deepened his knowledge and understanding of the British working class, but all his political life Lenin was a continuous student of British affairs in general and of the British Labour movement in particular. The volume *Lenin on Britain* has a wealth of material dealing with every conceivable aspect of British political struggle—the development of the British economic system, the nature of the British State, the Party system, imperialism and its effect on the Labour movement, the national liberation struggle in the British Empire, the various trade union and Labour organisations, their history and internal contradictions, the British working class attitude to the First World War, the fight against British intervention against the young Soviet Republic, the problems of founding a Communist Party in Britain.

Lenin was a great admirer of the Chartist movement. Britain, he wrote:

"gave the world Chartism, the first broad truly mass and politically organised proletarian revolutionary movement . . ." (The Third International and its place in History, May 1919, in *Lenin on Britain*, p. 395).

He embarked on a study of the problem, which is of such fundamental importance for understanding the British Labour movement, as to why in the country that had the first modern proletariat, and in many ways was a forerunner in the development of working class organisation, there was so great an ideological retreat in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Lenin continued the work of Marx and Engels in analysing and explaining the roots of this ideological retreat. Britain, he said, had two important distinctive features of imperialism already in the middle of the nineteenth century, viz. "vast colonial possessions and a monopolist position in the world market" ("Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism" in *Lenin on Britain*, p. 297).

Britain had a temporary monopoly of world trade, and this monopoly explained the temporary victory of opportunism in Britain:

"... monopoly yields *super profits*, i.e., a surplus

² There must be a number of workers still alive who have memories of Lenin's visits to London. A booklet has recently been published in Moscow by the State Publishing House by V. M. Semyonov, *On the Places which Lenin visited in London*. It is possible that some reference might still be found in the local or national press. We would be very grateful to receive from any reader any possible sources of material on this.

of profits over and above the capitalist profits normal and customary all over the world. Of these super-profits the capitalist *can* devote a part (and no small one at that!) in order to bribe *their own* workers to create something like an alliance . . . between the workers of the given nation and their capitalists *against* the other countries" ("Imperialism and the Split in Socialism", in *Lenin on Britain*, pp. 320-321).

In this honeymoon period of rapid expansion of British capitalism and its domination of the world market, the British capitalists needed an increase in skilled workers, and were therefore prepared to pay for it (though their "willingness" always had to be spurred on by working class pressure and struggle) by making concessions, above all to the skilled, though it is true, however, that to an extent the whole working class of Britain in this period benefited materially at the expense of the exploited workers all over the world, particularly in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. However, if they benefited materially, in fact they suffered a deep loss. They lost their political independence, they were tied hand and foot to the ruling capitalist class. Opportunism dominated the working class movement.

It should be noted here that some early Marxist historians, treating this early, 1850-1880, period of the British working-class movement, saw only the weakness and the retreat. They did not see the other side of the picture. These great new trade union organisations of the working class, the new Model Unions, which were for the moment dominated by opportunism, could, in the future, become a source of tremendous strength for the working class when opportunism was challenged by revolutionary ideas, and revolutionary leadership.

"Socialism Again in England"

By the 1880's Britain's monopoly position was being challenged by the rise of capitalism in Germany and France, in the U.S.A., and by the first beginnings of capitalist development in Japan. Engels saw so prophetically that when Britain's monopoly position was ended, the socialist movement and socialist ideas would return to Britain:

"The truth is this: during the period of England's industrial monopoly the English working class have, to a certain extent, shared in the benefits of the monopoly. These benefits were very unequally parcelled out amongst them; the privileged minority pocketed most, but even the great mass had, at least, a temporary share now and then. And that is the reason why, since the dying out of Owenism there has been no Socialism in England. With the breakdown of that monopoly, the English working class will lose that privileged position; it will find itself generally—the privileged and leading minority not excepted—on a level with its fellow workers abroad. And that is the reason why there will be

Socialism again in England" (Preface to *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* January 11th, 1892).

As Engels had foreseen, socialist ideas and socialist organisations *did*, indeed, return to Britain in the 1880's. The Social Democratic Federation (S.D.F.), whatever its weaknesses, developed as a Marxist organisation in 1883, followed, in 1884, by the Socialist League, also accepting Marxism. But Engels was not able, limited by the perspective of his time, to foresee the nature of imperialism and how, when Britain lost its monopoly of the world market, "compensation" could, up to a point, come from the super-profits of a vastly extended empire (particularly in Africa) and the export of capital. This analysis was above all the work of Lenin, and is expressed most fully and brilliantly in his work, which is insufficiently known and studied in this country, *Imperialism and the Split in Socialism*, written in October 1916.

In this work Lenin summarises the analysis of imperialism developed in his earlier work *Imperialism*, and then applies this analysis to the effect of imperialism on the class-working movement. Now, he explains, in the last third of the nineteenth century we are in the period of the transition to imperialism proper. Britain has lost her monopoly but does that mean that *all* monopoly has disappeared? The social basis in Britain for opportunism and corruption in the working class has, certainly, narrowed, but does this, in any way, mean that it has vanished altogether? He replies in the negative:

"Super-profits have not disappeared; they still remain. The exploitation of *all* other countries by one privileged, financially wealthy country remains and has been intensified. A handful of wealthy countries—there are only four of them, if we mean independent, really gigantic "modern" wealth: Britain, France, the United States and Germany—have developed monopoly to vast proportions, they obtain super-profits running into hundreds, if not thousands, of millions, they "ride on the backs" of hundreds upon hundreds of millions of people in other countries and fight among themselves for the division of the particularly rich, particularly fat and particularly easy spoils" (*Imperialism and the Split in Socialism*", in *Lenin on Britain*, p. 321).

Henceforth, Lenin explains, from the export of capital and the exploitation of the colonial peoples there is still a wide basis for corruption of the working class, for opportunism in the working-class movement. Socialism, it is true, "returns to Britain", but the effects of opportunism now express themselves even *inside* the socialist movement. Henceforth inside the great Western capitalist states, there are *two trends* in constant struggle within the socialist movement. In the continental countries like France and Germany the conflict expressed itself in a struggle between Marxism, on the basis of which

the continental mass Social Democratic Parties have been founded, and revisionism, of the type of Bernstein, which maintained, superficially, a Marxist terminology, but the content of which was pure reformism. In Britain it expressed itself in a struggle between Marxist organisations like the S.D.F. (later to become the British Socialist Party, B.S.P.) and the reformism of the Fabian Society founded in 1884, the reformism which was to come to dominate the Independent Labour Party (I.L.P.) founded in 1893, and the Labour Party, founded as the Labour Representation Committee, in 1900. The British reformists could not, in the strict sense of the word, be termed revisionists, for openly rejecting Marxism they could hardly be said to revise it. But the content of British reformism, when analysed, is exactly the same as the content of contemporary revisionism. Henceforth the Marxists of the S.D.F. and then the B.S.P. found themselves struggling against the reformists in the Fabian Society, in the I.L.P. and the Labour Party for the leadership of the working-class movement.

Against Opportunism and Sectarianism

Lenin spent much time analysing the opportunist and reformist trends within the British Labour movement, and also criticising the forms of left sectarianism that were widely spread inside the revolutionary ranks, which helped to weaken the struggle and, to an extent, aided the growth of reformist influence.

His major work *What Is To Be Done?* written between the autumn of 1901 and February 1902 contains both a general onslaught against "economism", of extreme relevance to the British Labour movement of that time as well as to the movement today, and also a number of specific references to Britain. *What Is To Be Done?* was written just before Lenin's first visit to London. It tilts against those "economists" who thought that all that was necessary was to restrict the struggle to the immediate fight on economic demands. Let us lead the mass movement on the immediate struggles, said the economists, and the rest will follow of itself; the role of the socialist is to fight on immediate demands and not the all-round political battle for socialism; the fight for socialism will arise inevitably, spontaneously, out of the fight on economic demands. The role of the socialist is reduced to that of a militant trade unionist.

Lenin understood very well the very important role that trade unions and the fight on immediate economic struggles had to play, but he saw that a Marxist could not confine himself to these immediate struggles, and that a Marxist party had to carry out the all-round political, many-sided struggle for socialism amongst all sections of the working class and its allies amongst the working people. How many militant workers in Britain have suffered and still

suffer from the illusion that the political struggle for socialism will grow spontaneously out of the immediate trade union struggle! Experience has shown again and again that no worker, or workers, spontaneously, by themselves, come to understand the science of socialism. British Labour history rubs in the lesson again and again. Between 1910-1914, the period known as that of "Labour unrest", some of the greatest economic battles were fought that the British working class has ever known. And yet, when the First World War came, within a trice, the struggles collapsed, and under reformist leadership the British working class was overwhelmingly harnessed to the war machine of capitalism. How many hundreds and thousands of militant strikes have been fought, with all the hardships suffered, and with all the courage exerted, and yet out of them no more workers have been won for a real understanding of socialism, of what capitalism is, of the nature of socialism that is historically destined to replace it, and of all the complex problems of the transition from capitalism to socialism! The individual tragedy of many an old worker in Britain is that he has given his whole life to the cause of Labour, struggled, organised and sacrificed, and yet dies without any real understanding of the society in which he lived or the new society that must replace it. The lessons of *What Is To Be Done?* shout out still today for study by the British working class, for economism is still very strong in the ranks of militant workers, including within the Communist Party itself.

Criticism of British Reformism

Lenin dealt with many of the specific forms taken by reformism in the British Labour movement. He tilts against the lack of attention to theory in the British working-class movement, speaking of:

"... the indifference towards all theory, which is one of the main reasons why the English working-class movement crawls along so slowly, in spite of the splendid organisation of the individual unions" ("What Is To Be Done?" in *Lenin on Britain*, p. 35).

The theory of "no theory" is one of the continual boasts of British reformist leaders. Men like Morrison have continuously bragged of the practical nature of British Socialists, who are free from the "dogmatism" of continental Marxism, who "do first things first" and "do not bother about complicated theories and perspectives", repeating in *their* language the theory of Bernstein that "the movement is everything, the end is nothing". But the theory of "no theory", means in practice, as Lenin showed, that if within the heads of the British workers there is not *consciously* the theory of socialism, there is inevitably, *unconsciously*, the theory of the ruling capitalist class.

Lenin fought against the theories of municipal

socialism which were so widely preached by the Fabian society and came to have so strong an influence in the I.L.P. and later in the Labour Party. The Fabians taught the "inevitability of gradualism". They preached that socialism would be achieved by the gradual, piecemeal, step by step reforms, *within the framework of capitalism*; that socialism would be achieved by the gradual winning of seats on the local councils and in Parliament; that it could grow up, as it were, within capitalism, that it would be grafted on to capitalism. The Fabian, surveying the map of Britain, would plant a red flag wherever there was a local or national electoral victory, hoping that he would one day awake to see that the whole of his country had "become socialist". He set out to permeate the ruling class with socialist ideas, and ended by permeating the working class with the ideas of capitalism. He put all his stress on the local municipal reforms which British revolutionary critics came to denounce as "gas and water" or sometimes "milk and water" socialism. As Lenin put it:

"The bourgeois intelligentsia of the West, like the British Fabians, elevate municipal socialism to a separate 'trend' precisely because they dream of social peace, of class conciliation, and wish to deflect the attention of the public from the fundamental problems of the economic system as a whole, and of the *state structure* as a whole, to minor problems of *local administration*" ("The Agrarian Programme of Social-Democracy in the first Russian Revolution, 1905-1907" in *Lenin on Britain*, p. 78).

Lenin has many vivid passages on the role of right wing reformists like Ramsay MacDonald and Philip Snowden. He saw their inevitable betrayal of the working class when many British workers were still looking upon them as leaders to be respected. He saw that men like this, whatever their subjective ideas, objectively were needed by and served the ruling capitalist class:

"The bourgeoisie *needs* such hirelings as enjoy the trust of a section of the working class, and as embellish and furbish the bourgeoisie with talk about the reformist path being possible, throw dust in the eyes of the people by such talk, and *divert* the people from revolution by giving glowing descriptions of the charms and possibilities of the reformist path" ("The Tasks of the Third International" August 1919, in *Lenin on Britain*, p. 417).

The Nature of the State

One of the greatest contributions of Lenin in his struggle against reformism, and one still today of the greatest importance for the British working class, is his teaching of the nature of the state, developed in greatest detail in his *State and Revolution* but repeated again and again throughout his speeches and writings. Perhaps the weakest point, the Achilles heel of the British working-class movement including

many militant sections, has been the absence of a clear understanding of the nature of the state.

The reformists, from the Fabians through Ramsay MacDonald and Herbert Morrison to Lord Attlee and Mr. Gaitskell, have again and again reiterated the neutrality of the state. The state, they have claimed, is something neutral, unbiased, non-partisan, above politics; like any piece of machinery it will equally serve capital or labour, all that is therefore necessary is to win a majority of seats in Parliament, and this "neutral" state, which has hitherto served capitalism, will now obediently defend the interests of labour. For so many militant British workers, including those who wholeheartedly today are fighting to retain Clause 4 in the Constitution of the Labour Party, socialism is something purely economic, a transition from the private to the social ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange. For them the political stranglehold by the bourgeoisie on the capitalist state is not understood. For many, state control is synonymous with socialism, and they fall ready victims to the right wing reformist conception that what, in fact, is the growth of state monopoly capitalism, the holding of political power by the great monopolists of Britain, is a growth of socialism. To many, the leaders of the armed forces, police force, secret police, civil service, etc. are seen as neutral. The tremendous growth in recent years of the power of the monopoly capitalists, expressed in the extension of state operations in economic affairs and control of the mass media of propaganda, is ignored. Four Labour Governments have left the capitalist state machinery virgin and intact, or rather, at times, even helped to strengthen it. Ump-teen Labour Party programmes, some of them like *Let us Face the Future*, published in 1945, containing many progressive programmatic policies in the field of economic and social advance, have left without mention the issue of the state.

Lenin not only laid down a brilliant series of generalisations on the evolution and character of the state, not only observed the strengthening of the capitalist state machinery in Britain since the days of Marx and Engels, not only analysed the growth of state monopoly capitalism, but made many vivid statements on the specific character of the British state machine.

He made some very shrewd observations, most topical today when some right-wing reformist would like to put the trade union movement at the mercy of capitalist law, on the class character of the British judiciary:

"The bourgeois judges, despite the bitter resistance of the workers, awarded damages to the capitalists! To order trade unions to compensate the capitalist gentry for losses caused by a strike means, in fact, to kill the right to strike. Judges who cringe

to the bourgeoisie know how to nullify liberties even guaranteed by the Constitution, when it is a matter of a struggle between labour and capital" ("Notes to 'The British Labour Movement and the Trades Union Congress'" October 31st, 1905, in *Lenin on Britain*, p. 46).

Lenin attacked the idea that workers could *control* Britain without political power, without exercising the dictatorship of the proletariat:

"Control without power is an empty phrase. How can I control England? In order to control her I must capture her navy. I know that uneducated masses of workers and soldiers may naively and unintelligently believe in control, but it is sufficient to ponder over the fundamental element of control in order to realise that this belief is a retreat from the fundamental principles of the class struggle . . . 'please control me, but I will have the guns. You be satisfied with control,' they [the capitalists] say. . . . Control without power is a petty bourgeois phrase" (1934 edition of *Lenin on Britain*, p. 208).

The British Labour Party

Making his main attack on the role of reformism in the British working class, and attacking reformism even when it found expression inside the revolutionary section of the British working class, like the chauvinism of Hyndman and others within the S.D.F. and B.S.P., Lenin always, simultaneously, attacked all expressions of sectarianism, i.e. the separation of the revolutionary sections from the mass of the workers, running in advance in such a way as to lose contact with the masses, the use of "super revolutionary" phrases of a leftist type. He understood very well that in a sense leftism came as a sort of revenge of opportunism. Militant workers, in their hatred of everything reformist, could easily take up ultra-revolutionary positions, throwing out the baby with the bath water. His *Left Wing Communism—An Infantile Disorder*, first published at the end of April 1920, was a handbook of criticism of leftist trends within the international Labour movement, with particular reference to Britain. As we shall see, Lenin developed his ideas on sectarianism particularly in relation to the problem of the foundation of Communist Parties in many countries, including Britain. A very fine demonstration of simultaneous attack on right-wing opportunism and left sectarianism was given by Lenin when he had to take a stand on the question of affiliation of the Labour Party to the Second International, at the 1908 meeting of the Second International.

Bruce Glasier of the I.L.P. supported affiliation, claiming that the fact that the Labour Party did not recognise the principle of class struggle was unimportant, and spoke contemptuously about principles and catechisms. Kautsky supported affiliation on the grounds that the Labour Party was in fact waging the class struggle. From the ultra-leftist point of

view Hyndman of the S.D.F., supported by a number of continental delegates, completely rejected the idea that the Labour Party should be allowed to affiliate. Lenin, attacking both right-wing and leftist approaches, supported affiliation, although he made it quite clear that the Labour Party was not yet *in fact* "a party really independent of the Liberals and does not pursue a fully independent class policy." He stated that the Labour Party:

"represents the first step on the part of the really proletarian organisations of Britain towards a conscious class policy and towards a *socialist* workers' party."

And he added in an article commenting on the meeting that:

"When there exist objective conditions which retard the growth of the political consciousness and class independence of the proletarian masses, one must be able patiently and steadfastly to work hand in hand with them, making no concessions in principles, but not refraining from activity *right in the midst* of the proletarian masses" ("Meeting of the International Socialist Bureau, October 16th, 1908" in *Lenin on Britain*, pp. 112 and 114).

The First World War

When the First World War broke out in 1914 the official Labour organisations rallied to support the war, and despite all the Second International's resolutions against war, British trade union and Labour Party leaders, like their counterparts in France and Germany, became recruiters of labour to the machine of war. Lenin had already analysed the role of the leaders of the Second International, including those of Britain, and he had also shown the growth of chauvinist tendencies inside a number of the revolutionary organisations, like, in Britain, the B.S.P. During the war, despite all difficulties of contact and exchange of information, he continued to follow developments inside the British Labour movement, and watched with particular interest the struggle inside the B.S.P. between the internationalist section, who opposed the war, and the chauvinists led by Hyndman.

The October Revolution was received with the greatest enthusiasm in wide circles of British labour. Again, Lenin watched and described the reaction of the British workers to the first developments of the young Soviet Republic, and was full of praise for their fight against the war of intervention launched by fourteen capitalist states headed by Britain. No matter how much the press in Britain tries to hide the truth, he wrote, it forces its way into the open:

"The workers feel and understand that the revolution in Russia is their revolution, a workers' socialist revolution. And even in France and Britain we now witness a movement among the workers with the watchwords: 'Withdraw the troops from Russia!'"

(Speech at a Presnya District Workers' Conference, December 14th, 1918, *Lenin on Britain*, p. 386).

Again, in September 1920, when Soviet troops were advancing against the reactionary Poles who had attacked them, and when the British Government was threatening new intervention, Lenin watched with admiration how the British workers by their mass demonstrations brought the intervention threat to a stop:

"When the British Government presented us with an ultimatum it turned out that the British workers had first to be consulted . . . these tremendous developments in the British working class movement are exerting a powerful influence on the world labour movement. . . ." (Speech at the 9th All Russian Conference of the R.C.P.(B), September 22nd, 1920, in *Lenin on Britain*, pp. 545, 546).

For a Communist Party

The story of Lenin's help in drawing the Marxist groups together in Britain in order to form the Communist Party of Great Britain has been told in some detail in my article on the *Foundation of the Party* in the January 1960 issue of *Marxism Today*. *Lenin on Britain* contains many extracts from Lenin's writings bearing on this.

Lenin polemised against those who did not see the need for a new revolutionary type of Party, and the complete difference in form and content between such a new party and the old traditional reformist type of party.

But in particular in the course of various letters, articles and discussions, he polemised against the various Leftist sectarian trends in the revolutionary section of the British working class. Against those who in their disgust with the betrayal of many workers' leaders who had been sent to Parliament, and there betrayed those who sent them, and who therefore took up an anti-parliamentarian line, Lenin again and again explained that there were two ways of working in Parliament—a reformist and a revolutionary. For a revolutionary, he said, Parliament can become a tribune from which the revolutionary programme of the Party can be explained. Not all "parliamentarians" are Ramsay MacDonalds, there have also been Karl Liebknechts.

On a whole number of occasions, and particularly in his *Left Wing Communism*, he polemised against those like Sylvia Pankhurst and the Workers' Socialist Federation (W.S.F.) who wanted a "pure", "direct", "unswerving" road to socialism without compromises and without alliances.

On several occasions and particularly in the sessions of the Second Congress of the Communist International, he argued with British Shop Steward representatives who stood for revolution, but wanted revolution without a revolutionary party, and thought all the necessary functions could be

performed by militant trade union organisations like, for instance, the Shop Stewards' Committees.

But above all, he stressed the importance that the new British Communist Party should be closely linked with the masses. In a letter, written in English to Tom Bell on August 13th, 1921, he stressed that it was necessary:

"To create a very good, really proletarian, really mass *Communist Party* . . . that is, such party which will *really* be the Leading Force in *all* Labour movement . . ."

(Letter to Thomas Bell in *V. I. Lenin on Britain*, p. 563)

One point that Lenin emphasised again and again when discussing the foundation and role of Communist Parties throughout the world, and particularly in the great imperialist countries of the West, was their duty, in the interests of proletarian internationalism, of solidarity with the colonial peoples. He stressed this in his discussion with British delegates

at the Commission on National and Colonial Questions at the Second Congress of the Communist International. The struggle against British imperialism can only be victorious as a joint struggle of the working class in Britain and the national revolutionary movement in the countries of the British empire. Once formed, the small Communist Party of Great Britain was soon to give a good example of this solidarity in its struggles of support for the peoples of Ireland, Egypt and India, fighting for national independence in the bitter struggles of the first years of the twenties.

On this 90th anniversary of the birth of Lenin, the lessons of his speeches and writings, of his life and example, are as true and as topical as they have ever been. One of the best ways of commemorating this anniversary is to make more widely known in the Labour movement the contents of his writings and the example of his practical leadership of the international working-class movement.

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Discussion contributions

On “The Basis of Marxism”

Lucian Amaral

JOHN LEWIS was surely right to characterise the relation of Marxism to the philosophical tradition from which it grew as being at once the culmination of that tradition and its *transformation* into the science of society. It is all the more bewildering to read in the same article that we need “a theory that is more than a theory, a theory that is a philosophy of history and an ethic” (“The Basis of Marxism”, *Marxism Today*, February 1960).

To transform philosophy into science is to put an end to philosophy in the accepted sense of the word. This became inevitable as soon as it was understood that the course of nature and of human history is a continual process of evolution, and therefore the whole truth, the final absolute truth in which philosophy deals, can never be apprehended until the world and all the men in it have come to a full stop. Once it is grasped that truth is only to be had by way of relative truths, that it can only be arrived at by mankind’s accumulated knowledge of particular phenomena and their actual interrelations, we abandon the mode of philosophy for the mode of science. Thus Engels says of the materialist conception of history that it “puts an end to philosophy in the realm of history, just as the dialectical conception of nature makes all natural philosophy both unnecessary and impossible. It is no longer a question anywhere of inventing interconnections from out of our brains, but of discovering them in the facts. For philosophy, which has been expelled from nature and history, there remains only the realm of pure thought, so far as it is left: the theory of the laws of the thought process itself, logic and dialectics” (Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, p. 363, Vol. II, Marx and Engels, Selected Works, 1951 edition).

As with philosophy, so with ethics: where the one concerns itself with the presentation of the whole of reality in the shape of a system, the other makes it its business to present the whole conduct of man in the shape of a code. Both, in the end, are equally unreal because they do not correspond to the ceaseless change and development of nature and of history. Both, alike, are foreign to Marxist thought since they require for their validity a frozen world. To smuggle them back

hoping that we are somehow deepening the content of Marxism, or enhancing and elevating it, is to defeat our own purposes. In this matter, too, Hell is paved with good intentions.

Glance, for instance, at the ill-fated attempt in the article under discussion to discover a valid ethical basis for Marxism in the “theory of alienation”. “In Marx’s theory of *alienation* we have the ethic, the importance of which has too often been obscured by the emphasis which has been laid on economic analysis and political strategy. What *drove* Marx and Engels, the motive force behind their whole philosophy, was their conception of man under capitalism as stripped of his humanity and turned into a thing, a commodity. Marx’s theory of the dehumanisation of man is more than ever justified in precisely the advanced capitalist countries like Great Britain and America.”

Dehumanisation

Once we substitute abstractions like the dehumanisation of man, or the estrangement of man from his human nature, for the realities of the inhuman conditions in which men and women live and work from day to day, we fall into absurdity. We fail to see that the ordinary working people with whom we rub shoulders week in week out are growing ever more conscious, more articulate, more educated—one would be tempted to say “more human” if it were at all conceivable that any man could be more human than he is, or, for that matter, more human than the next man. We ignore, likewise, that it is precisely in the *less* developed capitalist countries, amongst the colonial peoples, that Marx’s description of the law of capitalist accumulation fits like a glove. There, indeed, “the accumulation of wealth at one pole is at the same time accumulation of misery, agony of toil, slavery, ignorance, brutality, mental degradation, at the opposite pole” (*Capital*, Vol. II, Ch. XXV, p. 661, 1889 edition).

Working within the abstract categories of ethics we necessarily lose touch with reality and betray ourselves into a position too close for comfort to that of the bourgeois intellectual who bewails what he calls the “human predicament”; against our will we approach the viewpoint of the bourgeois philistine who sees the majority of his fellow men as a soulless herd. From the angle of ethics

it is inevitable that we should contrast Man and Human Nature, instead of contrasting living men and their material conditions of life; that we should end up by picturing man as being unworthy of himself, and not by showing that the slum-dwelling is unfit for men.

As with the "theory of the dehumanisation of man", so with the question of the relation of the individual to society. In this context John Lewis tells us that Marx "is careful to emphasise that socialism does *not* signify the subordination of the individual to the state", and goes on to quote from Marx himself: "What is to be avoided above all is the re-establishing of 'Society' as an abstraction *vis-à-vis* the individual. The individual *is* the social being. His life, even if it may not appear in the direct form of a communal life carried out together with others, is therefore an expression and confirmation of *social life*" (Marx, *Manuscripts of 1844*, p. 104).

Whether Marx actually intended this passage to be read in the sense of a warning that socialism does not signify the subordination of the individual to the state is a little open to question. Anyway, like it or not, the subordination of the individual to the state is a necessary condition of any state existing at all. What seems really to be meant is that society and the individual must not be conceived of as antagonists; that society is not an alien power confronting the individual in a hostile form.

We all know that the "individual" with no roots in society, developing his personality as it were under his own steam, jealously protecting it from the destructive inroads of his social environment, is a stock figure of contemporary bourgeois mythology. This isolated and eccentric creature is contrasted with the drab uniformity which is supposed to characterise the socialist world. What is not understood is that the rebel without a cause mirrors the contradiction between the kind of man a bourgeois society creates and the kind of world with which it confronts him. Just as bourgeois society creates the means of production which it cannot fully exploit, so it brings into existence the personalities for whose full development it cannot allow the opportunities. Bourgeois society thus finds its hands full of intellectual outsiders and teenage delinquents, and its only remedy is to banish one to an ivory tower and the other to Borstal because it cannot conceive of any solution to be found in society itself. Against this the Marxist sets the real picture of the individual as the social being. The true solution of the individual problem has now to be found not within oneself but outside, in society. From this angle the condition

of the full development of each is the full development of all. Since it is through society that the individual comes to be, since it is in society that individuality finds its expression, the point is not that we must shun society but that we must change society.

By all means let us contradict the catch-penny picture of the socialist world as a vast police state. But not at the cost of implicitly accepting any notion of the individual and society as being opposed antagonistically to each other. It is bourgeois philistinism which sets the interests of the individual man against the common interest of all other men, and by estranging him from his fellows estranges man from himself—from his social being. This is what Marx said was to be avoided above all.

Moral Conceptions

All that remains to be questioned is the plea with which John Lewis concludes his article: is it desirable that we should have "a clear restatement of the ethical humanism of Marxism and its moral ideal"? Marxism owes much to Humanism, and in a sense it makes possible the realisation of humanist aspirations since the emancipation of the workers also brings about the emancipation of all men, who find themselves at last in a position to control both nature and their own history. But having said this we must add that ethical humanism in no way describes the content of Marxism, and is in fact far more appropriate to the naïve socialism which scientific Marxism superseded. Whether Marxism has a "moral ideal", or stands in need of any such thing is a question that deserves some more careful elucidation.

Moral imperatives—call them "laws" or call them "ideals"—necessarily assume either the validity of the idea of "God" or the validity of the idea of "Man as God", the "full human being". The humanist conception that moral laws correspond to true human nature, and express the conditions of a fully human existence, is no less idealist than the notion that the moral law expresses the will of God. The humanist sets out from the abstract *idea* of Man and his Human nature, and sees history as the *movement of this idea* towards its own realisation. Whether or not the humanist chooses to word it as unambiguously as this, is beside the point. He has committed himself to a belief in a "human nature" that has not yet been realised in any flesh and blood men and women who have ever lived in this world, and he cannot escape the logical consequence: that men and women have never yet been fully human beings, that they have

never yet lived up to the realisation of their full human nature which thus remains an idea in the mind of . . . God?

The Marxist, taking the standpoint of historical materialism, sees moral conceptions in the perspective of time and place and circumstances, and recognises in them the necessities of the societies in which they arise. "Moral Laws" are the forms under which society *alienates* the necessities of its own existence and endows them with a fictitious validity of their own, so that they come to confront society and the individual in an antagonistic shape as alien categorically imperatives. The Marxist "negation" of moral laws and

ideals does not, by any means, diminish their real social content, but lifts them on to a higher plane in which they can be seen for what they really are—i.e., conformity to social necessity. Stripped of the mask in which it disguises itself as a law above society and above the individual man and woman, morality is rid of the antagonism between itself and society and between itself and the individual man. "Moral" behaviour is no longer a weary straight path to be followed by ignoring the flowery crooked lanes, but an inevitable choice for men once we substitute for moral laws and moral ideals the Marxist concept of the knowledge of necessity.

On the Welfare State

Joe Bent

I WOULD like to amplify Katherine Hood's point concerning the retirement age of pensioners in our society. For behind her factual correction of John Bright's article lies an important working-class attitude.

John Bright, in a previous article, had said that the increased pension payable to those who stay at work after the age of sixty-five had virtually raised the retirement age to seventy.

Now the official figures are that throughout Britain out of every 100 men aged between sixty-five and seventy only 51.3 have retired from work. Moreover the Phillips Commission Report (Cmd. 9333) showed that at the age of seventy retirement rate increases very sharply—only 20.9 per cent of all men aged seventy or over remain at work.

Where John Bright seems to be on dangerous ground is his assumption that it is the annual increment in pensions which leads to postponing retirement. That would imply the increments are substantial and worth waiting for. They are not. Even the Phillips Commission admitted they were not. Nothing that Marxists say should give the wrong impression that they are.

The truth surely is this—most people dread the poverty of living on a pension (with or without annual increments), and are determined to *go on bringing home a full week's wage* as long as their health (and their employers') permit them to work.

In his exhaustive community study of Bethnal

Green's aged, Mr. Peter Townsend gives a moving description of one old man's desperate search for work, after the age of sixty-five and after he had had to give up his job because through ill-health he could not stand the pace.

The point is he gives this case as *typical*; his table 35 showing the reason for men retiring from work gives only 7 per cent as retiring simply because they wanted to. The remaining 93 per cent gave up only when ill-health or their employer forced them to go.

I do not consider that Katherine Hood's reply gave a sufficient picture of this pitiless compulsion to stay on at work. No doubt she compressed her arguments to save space.

One other factor seems to me worthy of examination by Communists. It is common for social workers to explain with paternalism that "the old dears don't want to retire; they don't seem to know what to do with their time".

And so a post-war trend in old people's welfare has been the sponsored workshop and the expertise about "clubability of the aged".

But just helping the old people to kill time is no answer to this problem. Working people are not like stockbrokers who have never known useful work and therefore find a day spent hanging round the golf club, after they have retired, not unlike a day spent hanging round the office. For a working man, retirement means a decisive break in his life.

"Keeping his hands busy" is not the answer. What he pines for is the valued experience of socially productive labour. His labour power—his

only commodity—is now useless, and he finds himself without status in the eyes of his family, and the neighbourhood. From being the main bread winner (and hence the head of the family) he has become just a poor old chap who has got nothing to do.

What is needed, therefore, is not a bigger and better welfare state for the aged—the very conception smacks of things handed out from above—We need a Socialist State.

Socialist society could unleash the creative energy of old people in a socially useful way; it would draw on their long experience of trade union organising, enabling them to work together for the community. It would enhance their status.

It is this spirit in China which has set old men

to happily growing the *best* chrysanthemums, the *finest* vegetables—ever trying for the sake of the *whole* village to improve the strains.

It is this which in the Soviet Union has given old people so important a part in the voluntary administration of local services (and the more administration is decentralised and put on a voluntary basis, the more will this be so).

It is this status accorded to old people in socialist society which makes retirement something to look forward to—and not dread. It stands in sharp contrast to the welfare state with its sack for the elderly when they get too slow to be profitably worked, and thereafter a “helping hand” lest they discredit the system by actually dying of poverty in the streets.

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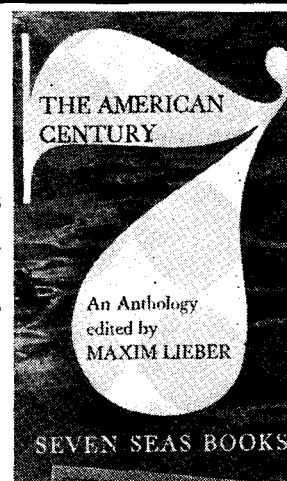
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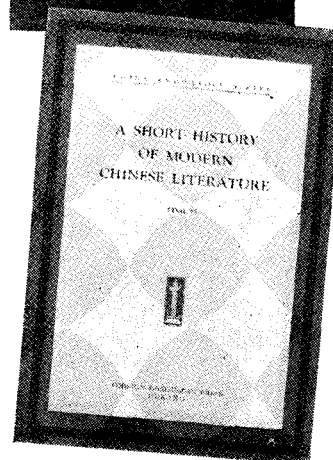
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